THE LOVE OF OUR LORD

ABBÉ HUVELIN

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THE LOVE OF OUR LORD

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BY

ABBÉ HUVELIN

TRANSLATED BY

ALGAR THOROLD

WITHDRAWN

LONDON
BURNS OATES & WASHBOURNE LTD.
PUBLISHERS TO THE HOLY SEE
1930

7,639

NIHIL OBSTAT:
EDUARDUS J. MAHONEY, S.T.D.,
Censor deputatus.

IMPRIMATUR:
EDM. CAN. SURMONT,
Vicarius generalis.

WESTMONASTERII
die 24ª Februarii, 1930.

MADE AND PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

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FOREWORD

THE following pages were put together by a hand whose labours have been interrupted by death.

They remain unfinished, and could never indeed have been complete, because they consist neither of the Abbé Huvelin's complete text, nor of the short-hand transcript of his improvisations. It must be remembered that they contain but simple notes, piously taken down by his hearers. Although their form is thus inevitably more or less incorrect, the friends for whom they are intended will recognise in them the verbal vivacity and heartfelt ardour from which they sprang. But, of course, they are but reflections. We think, however, that even these reflections should not be allowed to fade. The fire of their origin was so bright and burning that even still there may be souls who will find there illumination and warmth.

Thus, too, will be realised the supreme desire of her who gathered up these fragments that they might not be lost, and completed by this last labour a life which was nothing but one long effort to light in souls the lamp of the " Love of Our Lord."

Part I

THE GOSPEL

I

" THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND "

The End of the World for Each One of Us.

MY Brethren,

I will confess to you that if I had had to choose the text of the Gospel for the 1st Sunday in Advent I should not have selected the one which you have just heard read. I should probably have chosen the narrative of the entrance of Our Lord into Jerusalem, for I should have thought that that entrance, in so simple and humble a guise, would have been more suited to this season, as recalling the words of the Prophet : *Fear not, O daughter of Zion, for lo thy King cometh to thee, full of mercy, with his hands full of gifts.*

The Church has not so judged, and the Church has done admirably, because her spirit is deeper than ours ; she sees further and divines more truly than all human thought what is in conformity and in direct relation with the thoughts and the spirit of Our Lord. When she puts before us this text, apparently contrary to our ideas, more fitted to inspire fear than confidence, the Church sees truly : she sees what Jesus Himself had

done. Whom had He sent before His face? A conciliatory preacher? No, He sent a rough, an austere preacher, a preacher who spoke of death, who said: "The axe is laid to the root of the tree"; whose voice announced the Christ, in order to prepare every head to bow before Him, a voice which cried to sleepers: Awaken! Such was the voice of John the Baptist, arousing fear and terror, because its purpose was to lead souls to destroy every obstacle in the path of Christ.

That is why the Church, eager to enter into the thought of Our Lord, decided to prepare us for the sweetness of the God of Bethlehem, for the advent of the God of the Crib, by showing us the advent of the God of majesty on the last day of the world, that day of anguish and of fulfilled hope; day of anguish for the wicked, a day which we desire and sometimes call for, so sad and so full of suffering is the world, the day on which Jesus will avenge His unknown name and His souls who have been oppressed.

The Church, by proposing to us this subject of meditation, seems to say to us: Indeed you must love, it is very true, you must have confidence, it is very true—we never have enough confidence—but it is also true that you must *fear*, because a holy fear prepares the ways of Our Lord, because fear is good. If love urges us to good, fear turns us away from evil; fear is necessary: it is the last thing which disappears when the heart, love-forgetful, rushes down the path of evil, and it is the first thing which reappears when

the soul, awakening from her long sleep, begins to think of the things of God, and creep back to Him.

In this Gospel we read of the Last Judgement, the end of time. Our Lord has been speaking of the fall of Jerusalem, and the image suggests to Him the reality, the figure brings Him back to the truth; Jerusalem, the daughter of Zion, desolate because God has left her, reminds Him of the end of the world when God will cease to sustain the earth by His benediction. I shall not explain this passage to you, my Brethren, I have no intention of developing this theme, of telling you whether this end of time is near at hand or distant. We know nothing about it, we are ignorant of what will happen. God has not told us that, He has not entrusted it to the Son of Man to tell us. The circumstances of that event have not been revealed to us.

But there will be a definite moment when the world will finish for each one of us, a time, perhaps close at hand, when everything that shines, this sun, this moon, these stars, of which Our Lord speaks, when everything that fixes our gaze will fail us. There will be a moment when we shall stretch out our hand and find nothing on which to lean because the earth is failing us, the ground is flying from under our feet, and we are falling into the void. That moment may perhaps come quickly, in any case it will come certainly, and it will be the end of the world for us, the moment when nothing will mean anything more to us, when we shall

no longer be able to count on anything, when everything will be to us as if it was not, the moment when the creatures whom we have enjoyed or in whom we have hoped, will be but one more cause of sadness to us on account of their disappearance and because we have to leave them.

That moment will come . . . and another will also come, oh! may that moment indeed come, my Brethren, when one thing alone will shine in the darkness, when one light only will remain when all the others have been put out and hope alone shines over our heads. May you, my Brethren, at that hour when everything will disappear, be of those to whom Jesus will say : *Levate capita vestra*, lift up your heads and look on high. That only thing which will still be shining in the midst of universal darkness is the Cross of Jesus, the Sign of the Son of Man, the sign of truth, the sign of goodness.

Then will appear the Son of Man in His second Advent, full of Majesty and Glory. Our Lord Jesus Christ will be the judge because He is Man, a judge Whose words we cannot dispute, not that judge to whom Job said : How wilt thou measure thyself with me ? Hast thou an eye of flesh to balance thy account with man ? Dost thou know this weak body in thy divine impassibility ? And Job made a shelter for himself against the justice of God on the ground that he had suffered all alone from human temptations and sufferings ; he hurled his challenge, and by doing so fortified himself against the terror of judgement. But

He Who will appear on the clouds will be the Son of Man, that is to say, He Who has endured what we endure, temptations, weakness, death, everything except sin ; and He can judge justly because He has felt what is in humanity. St Augustine has truly said : I do not fear the judgement of a God of terror, but the judgement of that Son of God Who has loved me so much, Who has given me His love from His Incarnation to His death, Who has given me the Eucharist, His intimate presence, His inexhaustible grace, my movement towards Him ; the benefits for which I have not been duly grateful ; His tenderness, His repeated calls, all these marks of goodness ; His wounds, all that love could invent up to the point of dying for man's sake as a man !

That is the Man by Whom St Augustine feared to be judged, and he was right. Yes, I fear the judgement of Him Who has suffered and died for me, Who has shown Himself so patient and so good in so many ways. May I on that day, when everything fades and falls, see shining, not as an avenging fire but as a soft light, as a radiant hope and a call which sustains me, the light of the Son of God, the Cross of Christ, the only thing that shines in the hand of the dying man, the only solid foothold he finds, the abyss in which he can lose himself when the ground goes to nothing beneath him. That, my Brethren, is what we must look for and gaze at when everything fails us. Christ will appear in His majesty and in His power, like a judge dispensing an infinite mercy.

And in a few days the Church will say to you: Think of the little Child Whom the Feast of Christmas will show you, before Whom She will bid you prostrate yourselves in the midst of the song of Angels and the adoration of the shepherds, in the joy of the hope which is rising on the world and of the Heaven which is bowing itself towards the earth. Poor souls whom Jesus loves and whom He invites to be good, dear souls whom He will feed with tenderness and purity, think of that little Child, of Him Who comes to love you, if you do not wish to tremble at the thought of Him Who will come to judge the world with infinite majesty.

That, I think, is the thought of the Church.

He will come with great majesty, but He will not appear formidable to those who will have loved Him and sought Him with humility and confidence. Such was the thought of S. Teresa: "To be judged by Him Whom I have loved and Who has loved me, does not frighten me; I lift my head at the thought of the love with which I have been surrounded; it seems to me that my heart would never have had a movement of love if it had not been drawn by Him Who gives me the grace of loving Himself." Lift up your heads and see Him in His glory! How many signs there are which announce the harvest, the time when what has been sown will be gathered! How many signs which everyone can follow for himself in this spring of life which is hurrying on, in this cold which progressively claims the whole being! How many signs to announce

that death is near, that death which begins its work long before the day on which it finally strikes, which begins it when indeed we are scarcely born, which continues it through our mature life, and which makes itself felt by us by means of so many objects which once attracted us and which touch us no longer, by so many persons who have forgotten us, by so many things for which we used to live and for which we no longer live! What pains death takes to carry on its work and to remind us that it is there: *Videte ficulneam*. . . . See, the summer is about to appear, the summer, the time of harvest, when everything ripens, the season in which fruits fall of themselves, to germinate and fructify anew in the bosom of Mother Earth.

That is what Our Lord said to His Apostles; that is what the soul says to herself when she is seized by the thought that she shall shortly die, that death is there at hand, to be felt daily in the spirit, the heart, and the intelligence. Death is there, I feel it in everything; and the clearer my vision, the more clearly I see it; and if I am unable to see it, the reason is that I am unable to see anything clearly.

The harvest approaches. . . . For how many things have you not lived for which you no longer live? How many things there are which no longer live for you! How many things have left you, and, what is more sad, how many things have you not left?—Death goes on with its work, and it is as sure that it will complete it as it is certain that it has begun

it and that it goes on with it perceptibly and imperceptibly. Well, has it made you better? Has it reformed your heart and ennobled your soul? Has it carried your looks towards Heaven? This time which is coming, will it be a time of harvest, or a time of sterility?

My Brethren, listen to Jesus Christ: *Cœlum et terra transibunt, verba autem mea non transibunt.*—Heaven and Earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away. Here are the words of eternal life, the words of Him Who is coming in mortification, in humility, in patience, in all those virtues which are so repugnant to humanity and which human society so desperately needs: My words will not pass away. Hear these words of the Infant-God, they will speak to you of the humility you so much dislike, of the gentleness which is so little your virtue, of the mortification which you know so little how to practise, of the reparation for which you think you were not born; they will speak to you of the devotedness which is not afraid of humiliations and of the love which makes a heart wide; they will speak to you of the sacrifice which crowns all gifts, and these words will not pass away, for they are the words of truth.

When everything vanishes, this does not pass away: an act of justice, an act of goodness, an act of devotedness. There comes a moment when everything is effaced. The labours of the intelligence are no longer worth anything, and the soul may be heard crying out: If only I have not sinned! If only I have

practised virtue, humility, the love of God, the love of the brethren, generosity! If only I have known how to move towards God, the spring of the heart on high. That alone remains to reassure us against everything that comes out of this sad and in some sort infernal abyss of death, which strikes with terror.—My Brethren, Heaven and earth pass away; not only do they pass, but they have already passed. They say nothing more to us, they are as if they had never been. Only one thing then remains: and that is to have lived by the true life communicated to us by Jesus, to have loved or to have wept for lack of love, to have regretted our faults, to have performed such and such a duty which was demanded of us at such and such an hour. There is the only hope, the only force which remains for us at the last hour.

We hear these words every day, one day they will be our own. A day will come when everything will have passed, both what is high and what is low, when everything will be folded up and disappear, like the shepherds' tents; but Thy words, O Lord, if they have made to germinate in this poor proud heart devotedness and sacrifice, if they have made to grow in this arid heart purity and detachment, will remain as a germ of life, of hope, and of mercy.

These are the words of eternal life of which Our Lord reminds us to-day, so that we may at least detach ourselves by fear from evil, if we are unable to attach ourselves by love to the good.

II

"ART THOU HE WHO IS TO COME?"

ST JOHN THE BAPTIST is in prison and sends his disciples to ask Jesus: *Art Thou He Who is to come?*—It is the moment of his departure, and he wishes his disciples to receive a witness greater than his own, he wishes them to have the evidence of the works of Christ.

St John is a voice which asks only to die away to make place for Him Who is to come.

You know, my Brethren, the reply of Jesus. He is, as always, surrounded by a crowd of the sick. He bids His works speak, He shows the blind to whom He has restored their sight, the deaf who hear, the lame who walk, the poor whom He comforts; it is a telling reply. The disciples of St John listen to these words and admire these miracles, but to their eyes the greatest miracle of all is the figure of Christ, so different from that of the Precursor. For His is a disquieting figure; Christ requires an infinite goodness to veil His grandeur, the grandeur of what He contemplates and of what He is; and the disciples of St John are spellbound by His charm. They hear His words, greater than those of their own master.

What are the words they hear ? Jesus says to them : " Blessed are those who shall not be scandalised on My account. . . ." Will those who leave this little band be transformed ?—No, there is nothing but contradiction among them. Some say : See how good He is ! Others : No, He leads the crowds astray ; He is an impostor ! And they separate from Him.—And others will be scandalised by Him, and so it will always be. The disciples of St John, like all those who will come after them, see that men will always be divided by the name of Christ—even the good and the bad thief on Calvary.

They hesitate. Was Christ really He Who should come ? If He is come, if Heaven has visited earth, how is it that there are still blind, deaf, and lame ? I see the Pharisee always just as proud, and the publican no humbler, he knows what his pose is worth. I see the triumph of the hair of Magdalen, but she no longer wipes the feet of Christ, and yet that was the gesture which restored to her the beauty of her soul !

Was He really He Who should come ?

This is the question which hangs over the cradle of Bethlehem ; we hear cries of all sorts, cries of adoration and cries of hatred, cries of homage and cries of vengeance. . . . Lord, is it possible that Thou art come ? a clear-eyed justice must ask. Is it possible that Thou art come : are not the sick always with us ? . . . And why, Lord ? Oh, my Brethren ! Let us see if there is not an answer. This being into whom Christ descends, often presents a sad enough spectacle,

as if indeed Christ had not come. But look at what is still being done in the name of Christ, look at His works which go on. The lame, the deaf, the blind ; they are always with those who devote themselves to their care. Look at them gathered round St John of God, St Vincent de Paul, St Francis of Assisi, Father Damien, who died only a few years ago.

Look at those healing hands. They are the very hands of Christ, His heart comforting those who suffer ; the Gospel continues always to yield up its secret. It shines so brightly that we say : Miracles are no longer absurd. The Church preaches always the same doctrine, the same morality ; and our poor humanity always has need of this uplifting element.

The actions of Christ are multiplied, there are lepers on whom He is always pouring His blood ; these multiplied actions are the Sacraments. Yes, Christ is always with us, the poor know it well ; for many of them it is the only joy that they can receive in this world.

All the time that Christ thus remains exposed to the gaze of all we hear the same cries of the crowd. When one sees all that is wanting where Christ is wanting, one understands the beauty of His action, the force of His Gospel ; when one sees the fury of His enemies, one cries : Lord, to whom shall we go ? When one sees what wavers and gives way every time that it is proposed to remove Him, one repeats the words of the Centurion : " Truly, He was the Son of God ! " Why does this action of Christ no longer

seem to be in exercise to-day ? Allow me, my Brethren, to tell you. It is because there are no longer any sick who wish to be healed, there are no longer any blind who weep over their blindness, they put out their own eyes and remain willingly in their darkness ; the deaf no longer strive to hear, or the lame to walk ; willingly they would say to God : " If there is anything wrong, it is not my fault but Thine ! " It is because there are no more sick that there is no longer a physician ! It is because there are no more to save that there is no longer a Saviour ! Men to-day feel no more the need of being enlightened and sustained. They no longer hail Christ as their Saviour.

But if you are thirsty, Jesus is there ; He hears, as of old, the prayer of the Samaritan : " Oh, give me a little of that water, that purifying water of which nothing can take the place ! " If you appreciate that water He will give it to you. My Brethren, be of those who have the need of being saved, be of those who are hungry, who are thirsty, who are sick. Go where Christ is, He is in the midst of those who suffer. Look at these sufferers, join yourselves to them. There are still beings in prison who say : Is it possible that I should be suffering in this way if He had really come ? They are in prison as if He had not come ! There are some who do not know what to do, they are reeds shaken by the wind. There are some who suffer and do not know why. Go to such, be a little kind to them, so that they may say : " Yes, He has come, since a little happiness, a little tenderness has

come even to me; I hardly understood the words that were spoken to me; but my eyes have seen." The language of charity will always be understood, and you, my Brethren, will believe a little more when you show a little compassion; you will have a Companion with you on your road Whom at first you will not recognise, but, little by little, you will recognise Him Who makes us better, you will hail Him Who transforms our hearts, and He will sustain you, for He will repay you the good which you will have done.

III

"I AM NOT THE CHRIST"

The nearer a Soul approaches to God the smaller she feels.

MY Brethren,

This witness of St John the Baptist is very touching. He is asked: "Who are you?" and he shows the horror he has of appearing to be what he is not by three negations: "I am not the Christ. I come to announce Him. The baptism which I give is not what one might think; its efficacy comes from the dispositions of those who receive it, it is but a baptism of repentance. *I baptise in water.* I am not the Christ, and I am unworthy to loosen His shoe-strings." See his humility. . . . "Nor Elias," whom he might be thought to resemble in so many ways. . . . Elias, that marvel of austerity of whom Christ Himself says, that "He has come with the power of Elias," Elias, that great Prophet who taught their lesson to Kings, who in his own day preached the advent of Christ. He was not Elias "nor a prophet." The translation should not be *a* prophet, but *the* prophet. I am not that Prophet who should come! What is he then?

" I am a voice crying in the desert." How true that is : a voice, that is to say, nothing. A voice is a sound which issues from man and forthwith disappears ; nothing remains of it but the thought which it has carried, and which may live. When one gets old and many things have disappeared, there are others which, on the contrary, seem to grow greater ; such is that voice of goodness, of charity, which has issued from certain souls one has known. How beautiful is the sound given forth by a fine soul, by its acts of charity and of goodness ! that lives always ; the soul may disappear, but the examples it leaves behind remain.

The heavens proclaim the glory of God ! Yes, there are beautiful things in nature which speak to us of the glory of God. When St Augustine and St Monica were by the seashore before the beauty of nature, they remained wrapped in wonder, and their souls were lifted up to the beauty of God. If nature, if what is itself without animation, speaks of God, how much more should humanity make us think of Him ! The life of a fine soul is so beautiful if one follows out its details ! Oh, my Brethren, let us so act as to communicate an idea of God. In a very slight measure, it is true, at intermittent moments, we have shown a little charity, a little goodness ; if we have made anyone think of God that is the best that we can hope for.

Let us make God loved by showing that we do not love ourselves, and that those who see us act may say :

there is someone else in that soul who is living, and animates her.

Let our ambition—yours and mine—be to be a voice speaking of God. Note this double humility of St John the Baptist. . . . At the same time as he felt himself to be nothing, as he abased himself before God, he must have felt in his heart the joy of making others think of Him Whom he was announcing; he was glad to trample under foot the honour paid to him in order to rise himself towards God. It was the foot-stool on which the Most High would rest His feet.

The more he faced God the smaller he felt. Thus also St Francis of Assisi, when he looked at himself, judged that he was far from God, although he was so near by all that God had given him. The more a soul faces God the smaller she feels. Prepare the ways of the Lord. Let those who see you feel borne towards Him. I should indeed be happy to be a voice carrying those dispositions into your hearts.

IV

"THERE IS ONE IN YOUR MIDST WHOM YOU KNOW NOT"

Let us not live as if Christ had not come.

MY Brethren,

You have heard the reply of St John the Baptist: The Messiah, the Prophet, He Who should come, has arrived, he tells us abruptly and sadly. As for him, he is in the world to bear witness to Him Who is the light . . . and the Precursor is sad because Christ passes on His way, ignored in His self-humiliation.

Christ is with us, and the Pharisee continues to be the slave of his formalism and of his proud hardness of heart: the ironical Sadducee is still imprisoned in his narrowing worldly horizon; the publican still belongs to his money: he is hated, no doubt, but he holds in his hand the great power of the world. . . . Would life be otherwise if Christ had not come? To see the way in which things go on, although He is there, it is as if He had not come. He has changed nothing! . . .

What idea have we of happiness? The idea of

Christ? His doctrine is not received in the world. Is what we desire in accordance with His morality? Is it in harmony with the horizons which He has opened to us? Where does our love go and how do we live?

We live attached to our comforts, attached to futilities.—But, you will reply, do you think that I cling to them so much as all that?—It is possible that your comforts may sometimes become tedious, but try to detach yourselves from them, and you will see how strongly you hold to them. . . . Have you looked at the furniture of Bethlehem, have you looked at Christ's last home on the Cross? We have a horror of suffering. Have you seen Christ pass before your eyes, scourged and crowned with thorns?—We live in idleness. Have you visited the house of Nazareth? Have you heard that word: "I am poor!"? What is the Workman of Nazareth for us?

Have we met Him Who passed in doing good, Him from Whom there came out a healing virtue? Him Who has given us life, that life which we lose when we do not diffuse good around us? Has His austere look been able to rest complacently on us? Listen to those conversations in which our neighbour's character is so often torn to pieces, those conversations in which we laugh at things which ought to make us weep! . . . Have we really seen Him pass with that gaze which opens other horizons, and points to other loves?

He is close to you, He is in the midst of you, and

you have not seen Him. Things go on just as if He had not come.

But there are moments—too transient, no doubt—in which I admire the things of Christianity, and I find it so beautiful! . . . My Brethren, that is true, but it is not enough. What is Christianity?—A leaven. It must be mixed with the dough so as to make only one thing with it, it must be mixed with it molecule by molecule. What is the use of a soul without life? Christianity is nothing until it is incarnated in our actions, in our manner of acting, and our thinking. Hence the suffering of St John the Baptist; *it is the suffering of the priest* who loves souls, who loves his country, who loves what God has given him to love. . . .

The Messiah has come, and we live as if He were a stranger to us.

Our Lord has come, principally to give to us. And that is why St John the Baptist was indignant. The hands of Christ were full of gifts, but the world would not let Him give what He had to give. He was ignored. . . . To ignore is a form of contempt: "What have you to give me? Things that I do not want. There is a God; very well, I bow before Him without asking Him for anything." That is the supreme insult. St John the Baptist points Him out, that we may seek Him: "Behold the Lamb of God." —The first words of Christ are the same. He repeats them often in the Gospel: "Come to Me all you who are weary, all you who suffer." When He met that poor woman of Samaria, she did not know much about

anything ; but she was sick of coming to draw that muddy water, she was thirsty, and Our Lord said to her : " If thou hadst known the gift of God, thou wouldst have asked Me to give thee to drink." That is the desire of Christ's heart. He is here in the midst of us, and He wishes us to ask Him for something. As for us, we sit down in our misery, we are no good for anything, and yet Christ is there. Call Him, and He is there, though invisibly. If you had called Him, resignation, at least, and a certain sweetness would have passed over your sorrow, and you could have handed on that consolation to others ; but there you are, close to the tomb of a loved one, and it is like an abyss ! . . . Have you seen Him pass on the day of His Resurrection ? Have you seen that He is living and that He wishes to take you with Him there where there is no more death, there where He is Himself . . . ? You are in sin, which has betrayed you ; at first it shone into your eyes, and now it is a chain of iron, as St Augustine said, *and He is there !* The look of Christ does not only cause pardon to descend on the soul, it gives her back her beauty, her bloom, so to speak ; one feels that one may come out greater after one's fault, and that He can give the sinner joys of which faithful souls might be jealous. . . . But you do not ask Him for this pardon ! That is the cause of the grief of St John the Baptist. Christ is there, close to you, and you ignore Him.

And if indeed He has come and cannot help us, cannot give us His gifts, then is our state so much the

worse, then has He come only to create in the soul greater needs, deeper, more empty places. He has come only to leave her to more cruel disappointments. For He has come for evil, if He has not come for good. . . . This blasphemy is indeed true; "It would have been better that He should never have been born if He only came to extend the horizon of our sufferings, which nothing will still."

But, you will say, if He has come, if He is close to us, only a few steps off, if I believed that, if I could feel Him living in His Tabernacle, I could not breathe. I do not understand how the Apostles could live, I do not understand how they could do other than hold their breath, so close to Him. . . .

Do not be afraid, my Brethren, you will always live, you will live too often as if Christ had not come; there will always be a sort of forgetfulness which will permit you to live. I have no fears on that head. Ask Him what He wishes you to beg of Him, live as if He were there, live like those who know Him, like those whom He supports, like those of whom He is the torch, like those of whom He is the life.

V

"PREPARE THE WAY OF THE LORD"

How shall we Repent?

CHRIST wished to prepare the way for Him to descend to man. . . . He came as the Prophets so often had predicted. . . . The mountain has become the plain, Heaven has bent down to earth; enter, my Brethren, the stable at Bethlehem, see how low Christ has come down, has not the valley been sufficiently levelled and filled in?—You have to stoop to enter, and you will see there things which would be very unworthy of a God if He did not wish above all to save man.

God has become flesh; could the creature have been enhanced in a more inexplicable fashion? God has united Himself to her by His love. That sorrow which I have in my soul God has placed in His own.—He has known every kind of suffering, He also has wept over His country. It is by His tears that man is indissolubly united to God.

The crooked ways shall become straight. Remember the figures and images of the Old Testament. And now the paths become smooth and straight, and the

rocky places are levelled. How simple and, at certain moments, how easy the Gospel is ! The very road on which we walk carries us along. See what God has done to descend to man, to fill in the valley. But, my Brethren, we also have a work to do. The Kingdom which He comes to seek is within us. We have on our side to prepare His road, there are hills to be levelled, first of all the hill of pride. How can anything of Christ penetrate to us through that pride ? Tell me how much goodness, tenderness, and spirit of sacrifice it allows to pass, and I will tell you how much it lets pass of Jesus. The road is barred to Him, and He wants to find it open.

Where is the place of Him Who puts Himself out for others ? Every corner is filled with egotism. . . . The light no longer penetrates into this valley, we smile at pleasures which belong to the soul only, the thought of the Saviour has no longer a meaning for us. He does not penetrate into this dark pit where we live. And this other character, so severe and difficult and susceptible, what does it let pass of the Saviour, of Him Who said : " I am meek and humble of heart. . . ."

There is a road on which God descends and man tries to mount, but in order to do so he has to work ; and how does he work ?—By repentance, as St John the Baptist preached. Repentance is a rough workman with a hand that is sometimes hard, but suited for the work which has to be accomplished. Repentance is a movement of heart which changes the direction of life, which returns up-stream, it is some-

thing which covers up a fault and effaces it. Repentance is a resolution : " *Surgam et ibo* "—I will go, it is conscience that speaks—I will arise and go, it is a movement that leads us to good. Repentance is also an expiation ; it makes us accept sorrow, and, finally, indeed, makes us accept sorrow with a pure and holy joy.

Repentance springs from many sources ; let it come, my Brethren, out of the simple duties of your state of life. It may come from our faults : they are an open door to it. It may come from sorrow, from melancholy remembrances, from nameless griefs. It repairs, it raises up what sin had destroyed. When God cursed the earth He commanded it to bring forth thorns. Oh, let us not waste our time in a sad little life precluding all issue to sorrow, as doors are shut against draughts ; not thus is sorrow suppressed. Renew your repentance, let repentance do its work, it is repentance that fills in the valleys, that repairs the insufficiency of what ought to be done and has not been done. That is true repentance, my Brethren.

And what must we do for this purpose ? This question was addressed to St John the Baptist. Did he reply vaguely ? Oh no ! He did not say you will dig your grave with your knees. He condescended to little things. He dwelt on the duties of our state of life, which demand such great sacrifices. To the rich he said : " You who have give to those who have not." To the tax-collectors : " Be just ; receive payment according to law."

To soldiers : " Do not abuse your strength." He would have said to Cæsar : " Do not enter those mysterious homes of corruption, which you leave more degraded than when you entered ; it is the sense of your own degradation which makes you wish to degrade others." To Herod : " It is not lawful for you to take what belongs to your brother." And he repeated it to him, for he often saw this Herod, who demanded miracles to satisfy his curiosity. And to Pilate : " Do justice. Do not believe yourself quit of it through that ceremony of washing your hands." To Caïphas : " Put a feeling of justice into what you undertake in the name of humanity. You will condemn the Just One ! It will be through envy."

That is what St John the Baptist would have said. What he demands is what is demanded by a voice within us, and this voice, when we hear it, tells us on a poignantly clear note : You must do this, not only if you wish to be a Christian, but if you wish to be a man. When will you be a little good, oh ! my soul ? Let us listen to this voice of conscience, my Brethren. And when it shows us a wound, let us not go and hide it. Above all, let us not say : I am doing this now, but later on I shall make reparation. Later on ! . . . You think you see long intervals between yourself and death, in which you will burn what you have adored.— Make reparation for what you have done ? But do you know if you will be able to ? At the very time that one does things one says : I shall regret this later on ; what a way to live !

Is your time free? Is love always at your disposal to regret your faults? Do you know what sort of dispositions you will have later on? When we try to make an act of contrition, how clearly we see what we lack! One part of us has to drag the other part after it. Are you sure of being able to know the sweetness of repentance? I am perhaps handling you a little roughly, but there are certain kinds of sleep from which you can only be awakened roughly. If you hear to-day the voice which calls you to be a Christian, do not shut your ears, do not harden your heart, which becomes insensible so quickly: there will come a moment when that sound will no longer reach you. . . .

A sacrifice without compensation is asked of you, and you say: Lord, what wilt Thou give me? It is already so sad to live, life is a burden which weighs heavily on my shoulders! . . . But all flesh shall see the Saviour sent by God; a divine force has re-animated me; my purified eye has seen Him, my ear can hear Him, my soul is awakened by a great love, she recognises something of Him, she recognises His love and His charity; the best in her has been quickened.

God demands sacrifices indeed, but He recompenses them. He shows Himself to the soul expanded and happy in the hands of Him Who can save us and is beginning already to save us now.

VI

"WE HAVE SEEN HIS STAR IN THE EAST AND WE HAVE COME TO ADORE HIM"

I WISH to make with you, my Brethren, a few simple reflections on the Gospel which you have just heard read. I wish to bring out one point only: the fidelity of the Magi. It is all expressed in one phrase: "Where is this King of the Jews who has just been born? We have seen his Star in the East and we have come to adore him." That is precisely the cry of faith, the cry of a faithful soul: it is enough for her to see, and she comes promptly, in simple dispositions, in eagerness of heart. This is the cry of the Christian soul: *Videmus et venimus*.... We have come with all we have and all we are; it was enough to see what we have seen and we have come. There is one word of Our Lord which seems in contradiction with this attitude. He says somewhere: *Come and see!* No, these things are not contradictory. In order to come to God it is necessary first to have seen Him; but, afterwards, the nearer one comes the more one sees. We must start on our journey in the measure with which we see, and afterwards, in recompense of our goodwill, the nearer we

come the more we see ; that speck of light, that little star, becomes a constantly increasing brightness, and the more the light grows the wider are the horizons discovered. Each of us, like the Magi, has his star, something, that is to say, which draws him to God, that points out truth, that serves him as landmark ; all our soul has to do is to follow this star, to go where this truth leads her. She will arrive in the land where it will be blessed to be and blessed to remain.

This star which led the Magi was not the sun. It merely directed and guided them in the night, without dissipating its darkness, like faith, of which it may be considered as the image ; faith gives enough light for us to walk towards Jesus. If we started off, like the Magi, under the guidance of this little light, if we followed quite simply the path along which it leads us, ah, how far we should go ! . . .

Let us go as far as we can see, in the simplicity of a docile heart, of an obedient soul ; let us go with the faith of the Magi, which will be rewarded.

The star leads them to Jerusalem : learned men lived there, who saw many things, who studied in order to demonstrate and teach to others. These too saw the star ; but they have not come because, although they possessed light and science, their hearts did not interpret them : " He who has not charity does not know God." They read, indeed, in their books that from Bethlehem shall come forth a King ; but can this little pauper child, tied up in its swaddling clothes, be really the King predicted by the Prophet ?

They read aright; but they do not act aright; their germinating faith is not active. The attitude of the Scribes is that of many souls. . . . They will not go to Bethlehem, for you have to be very humble to go there. . . .

See, the star has stopped over the place where a child is found. Consider what the Magi must have felt. These elderly learned men, great, respected, who had left their kingdoms, their palaces, who had made a long journey. . . . There they are, stopping in front of a stable door: a little child is there. . . . Oh! how different to the God Whose existence they found in the Heaven of their studies, Whose name was written up there in those innumerable planets! As we may sometimes think, in the light of the Tabernacle lamp, that God is diminished, lowered. . . . They are not arrested by this temptation, they interpret what they see by love. Love has led them into folly, namely, this long journey; Love may well have led God into folly. . . . Yes, He has committed all the follies that love can make Him commit; He has humbled Himself as far as the Cradle, as far as the Cross, as far as the Eucharist. But that we may fall on our knees instead of turning away from these things, as from an incomprehensible piece of nonsense, the heart must speak and show us that there is nothing so great as devotedness, as love. Life is only good because we can lose it, because we can give it up.

The Magi, with their goodwill sustained by grace, have understood the Love which brought about the

Incarnation. They have understood the humility of the Incarnate Word, they have understood that Love by which God became a little child. If we understand anything at all about abnegation, about the gift of oneself, in a word, about all that is the contrary of egoism, then we shall understand this mystery. This strange spectacle, discouraging to the hearts of the proud, makes them prostrate themselves and adore.

Love alone could fill the abyss which lies between God and the soul, infinite Love which has at its disposal infinite power, and in this cradle the Magi saw the degeneration of man and the goodness of God coming to restore him. Now there are some things that can only be laughed at or adored. The Magi prostrated themselves, and their open hearts opened their hands and their treasuries; they poured out their gold, their incense, their myrrh at the feet of the divine child. He is a King, and His generosity has truly merited Him the Kingdom of our hearts. He is God: none but God could have done what He has done. He is man, lying on this bed of poverty and suffering while awaiting the bed of the cross. Let us offer what the Magi offered, let us offer what we have got. Our external riches ought, to some extent, to be devoted to the service of Christ, the riches of our heart ought to belong to Him entirely; let us offer Him the best of ourselves. The only value of incense is that it should mount to Heaven in smoke; the only value of the soul is what mounts to God in prayer and in love. To Him Who was made man to

be our Mediator, the Victim immolated, sacrificed for us, let us offer lives of humble and generous abnegation.

The same God is given to us in the Incarnation continued in His Tabernacle as in the Crib, the same God before Whom the Magi prostrated themselves, to Whom they offered their presents. Let us follow their example and come with them : we shall find the same God, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of the Eucharist. He is there to eternalise Himself in the act of sacrifice, in the act in which He has loved us the most. He is there, still tinier than at Bethlehem, so as to come all the way down to us and give us Himself. . . . Let us be faithful in the measure of what we have received, let us follow the star, like the Magi, and we shall be able to say with them : " *Vidimus et venimus.*" We have seen, and we have come.

VII

"HE WAS FOLLOWED BY A GREAT CROWD OF PEOPLE"

MY Brethren, this Gospel shows us the Divine Master where He usually was, where the Gospel most frequently shows Him to us, that is, in the company of the crowds whom He is instructing. When St John the Baptist sent his disciples to Him they found Him still with the crowd. "The Father has sent me to evangelise the poor." He was in a hurry to come into contact with poverty; at Bethlehem He receives the shepherds; at Nazareth He takes the same line. When He opened His mouth to set free the treasures of His heart, when He preached this Sermon on the Mount, He preached to crowds. It is they who have the first fruits of His teaching. Blessed are the poor! Blessed are those who weep! . . . It is to them that He dedicates His Gospel and to whom He gives, as it were, the first fruits of His instruction; such as they are the dearest to the heart of the Divine Master, the physician is found in the company of the sick. The poor, my Brethren, were the great preoccupation of the heart of Jesus; you find this at every moment in the Gospel. When He gazed on the

crowds He had pity on them, He saw them crouching and wandering, like sheep without a shepherd. This crowd is a somewhat sadder object of contemplation, not very encouraging, perhaps; now it will say: Long live our King! And later on it will cry out: Crucify Him! But the Divine Master sees deeply, and He sees the miseries, the needs and the sufferings of each individual soul. The name of every human soul whatever, highly placed or not, is suffering, each soul is a being who suffers and is in need. Something must be given to her, the Divine Master will not send back fasting those who follow Him; it is His great preoccupation.—Why should they be given to eat? That they may not devour Him?—Oh no! so that they may not fall, fainting, by the way. The eyes of Jesus are good, they are divinely good; they read and understand the depth of human misery. When He looks at the crowds Jesus experiences a feeling of immense pity, it is what we ourselves ought to feel.

The preoccupation of the Divine Master is, then, to relieve, to help the crowd. He has no other thought than that, wholly inspired by His heart. Ah, my Brethren, the Church, born of the Love of Jesus, born of His tenderness, the child of His devotedness and of His Blood, the Church will have no other preoccupation. Look for the faithful spouse where the bridegroom is; the Church feels that very profoundly.

It will be said: Yes, but this thought of charity, all that, is after all a fashion. Admit that it is Our Lord Who has made it the fashion! Where has He left

the perfume of His divine hands? My Brethren, He has left it with what is poor and humble. He laid His hands on children and on the sick and on the aged, on all those who suffered and who inspired Him with a profound pity, a profound compassion.

Is it not true that we live to-day by that perfume? The Church has felt that she could not do better than Christ. You will find her great Bishops—read their history—always near the crowd, close to those who suffer. Read the history of St John Chrysostom; he is not only a model of eloquence but also a model of charity. He presents the needs of the poor in so pressing a manner as to seem excessive to the government. The great orator is to be found in the company of the little ones of the earth, he is very proud in his attitude.

At another time another great orator, Bossuet, that great Bishop, went to school to St Vincent de Paul and profited greatly from what he learnt; it is to the poor that his first sermons are consecrated. This is where you find the great Bishops and the great Saints, the great souls who are our pride, our joy, and our crown: where do we find them?—Not elsewhere than with Christ. Where do you find St Francis? In love with the Love of God—he says so in his Will,—he expended himself with the poor lepers. At first that disgusted him. (St Francis was fastidious.) But he dominated his repugnance and found in their company a source of the purest and most beautiful love of God. Only those who understand St Francis can live at Nazareth.

Where is St Vincent de Paul to be found in the course of his life? Do you find him separated from the poor? He was poor, and he handled millions! He interested those who had plenty in those who had nothing; he awakened the tenderness of their heart in order to make those who were in need share in the superfluities of others. Once more, noble souls, great saints must be looked for where Our Lord was Himself, for they are a manifestation of the same love, the same tenderness, the same effusion of heart, the same charity.

To-day, my Brethren, this contact has unfortunately been lost. That it should have been so lost is our great sorrow, the wound from which we are suffering. There is, as it were, a separation between the crowd whom Jesus loved and the heart of the Priest. In order to get rid of the action of the Priest a prejudice has been discovered, and it has been well chosen. The crowd has been persuaded that justice and devotedness are but a hundred years old. Instead of seeing the victory of Christianity they only see the conquests of a movement a hundred years old, and they see nothing else; and those who used to listen to the Sermon on the Mount have turned away from it to listen to other sermons. The Church has been described to them in the terms employed by Tacitus about the notorious poisoner Locusta: "*An instrument of tyranny*." This poisoner was one of the principal means of government employed by the Roman Emperor. Men reply to the Church as to that

other woman, of whom Tacitus also speaks, the niece of Tiberius : " If you haven't got the first place you will always grumble ; you will grumble unless you have sovereign power." That is what Tiberius said to Agrippina. Men are taught in this way to suspect the teachings of the Church as a snare, to mistrust her gifts as if they were humiliating.

Hence, my Brethren, our sorrow, our acute sadness. " This mother will not be consoled because her sons are no more." The Church used to hold the first link of the chain, and this ring has been taken away from her. Childhood has been taken away, and old age ; she is not allowed to watch over the first steps of the child in life or to listen to the last sighs of her sons. Surely this, my Brethren, is the question of questions. In comparison with this question all others, in my judgement, are of no importance. Choose the government you prefer, what does it matter ! The discoveries of genius, the investigations of nature, what do they matter to God ! But when the hearts of children are robbed of their faith their mother, the Church, cannot and will not be consoled. This is the great question. I might say that it is really the one and only question. What can we do ? We can always do something ! Believe in the contagion of goodness, believe in the contagion of charity. Tell me, when you have come near good souls, have you found them isolated ? No, you have found, as it were, a work of fermentation going on, there is something there which has been collected and brought together, molecule by

molecule ; the leaven has made the dough rise. You have found holy souls united around one soul in whom faith shone forth (for there is not faith without rays issuing from it, any more than there is a sun without heat). You have found clusters of Christians, and you have been astounded by their influence. You are perfectly right. How often have I seen that in life ! This influence makes itself felt from below upwards and inversely. It is not only masters who exercise it on their servants, but I have often seen, let me tell you, a simple servant maid influence most truly and profoundly very worldly families. It is impossible not to feel ashamed before an obscure, humble, silent life of perpetual labour, not to say to oneself that God will one day arrange all this very differently, and will exalt the humble and lower the mighty. I have seen such an influence as this extend itself over whole families. We have the contagion of goodness, but what does it affect in so small a measure ? If we had plenty of it, it would end by doing something great. You believe this as I do, do you not ?

What is needed is goodness ! It is no use throwing the supernatural crudely before the eyes of those who do not understand it. That, my Brethren, is no use. A liaison is needed, and there is only one : goodness, charity, you feel it yourselves. That is the only way to conciliate and bring back souls. You must give yourselves, it must be so, and God will give you the necessary grace.

You must practise charity. Has not God put part

of our happiness under our control? As for me, a great part of the happiness which God has given me has been placed in the heart of others. The bread of our brothers is in our hands. Charity is not only charity for those who receive it, it is charity principally for those who give it; those who give are often in greater need than those who receive it.

You should look with kind eyes on your neighbour, not with that stare, acquired in *salons* where the company prowl about with their claws out—that stare which makes worse what is not good to start with. But have that kindly gaze, the gaze of Christ. . . . Oh! give us, Lord, that look which does good and which is so necessary for life. Light up that look in our eyes.

The Holy Eucharist will tell you to what limit one can love. Jesus is in the depth of your heart because He is astoundingly good and has forgotten what you used to be. And, inasmuch as He is there, bring your heart to the torch of His presence, that it may burn and consume itself before Christ. Multiply the hearts which live by the Heart of Jesus, by His goodness. *He* has not kept His distance: He is with us because He has forgotten all about it.

My Brethren, these are the feelings which should live in your hearts: if they do so, you will have done what little you could. I can see no other means that can be taken. What is it indeed for such great needs? And yet is something. Try, in your measure, to do something in this great warfare, the weapons of

which are above all goodness, charity, and love of God. The souls of men have not quarrelled with God, but they have been shown a caricature of Him; the Church has been represented to them as a tyranny. My Brethren, show them something true and sincere: show them truth and sincerity, together with justice and kindliness.

And you will bring souls to God; it is the duty of the present moment; it is impossible for them to live, they must die, if they do not belong to Jesus Christ

VIII

"I AM THE GOOD SHEPHERD; THE GOOD SHEPHERD GIVES HIS LIFE FOR HIS SHEEP"

MY Brethren, the parable of the Good Shepherd is the only one which is found in the Gospel of St John. Our Lord does not always speak in parables, He often employs comparisons, and to-day He assumes His most touching and personal aspect. He is not only the Good Shepherd of the Church at large, but for each of our souls. He is there for each of His sheep, and we are all invited to consider ourselves as the sheep of the Good Shepherd. He is there in a special and intimate way, as if each one of us were His only sheep, as if all His care were lavished on each one of us. Oh, my Brethren, how touching is this idea of a special providence for each one of us! We ask ourselves why Jesus loves us, what is the thought that inspires His love. He does not merely tell us that He loves us, but that He gives His life for His sheep; that He dies for what He loves. We should not read such things as that inattentively. We do not believe in a love that is nothing but words; but I see that Jesus loves us: He dies for love, I see Him on the

road of Calvary, going to meet His sheep and taking it on His shoulders. She is very heavy, her sins weigh cruelly! Jesus is not the kind of shepherd Who is looking for His own profit, Who needs His flock to live, Who will shear His sheep for His own enrichment. Oh no, my Brethren, you have only to look at the flock; see how beloved and how unworthy it is. One who has seen many souls understands that they can only be loved in God, but in God they will be loved with passion. Often one asks oneself how one can love them, with their ingratitude, the disintegration of their feelings, of the ensemble of what makes up a human soul. The soul is nothing except under the gaze of a lover, but then she is a great deal. And if the soul seeks for the reasons which God has for loving her she will not find them in herself. No fundamental principle whatever can be discovered in us, only in God. I feel in myself something so sad that I could never of myself believe in the love of God; but the only reason He gives us is that He loves us because He loves us. His Heart is rich and needs to diffuse itself over the emptiness of others like a brimming vessel. . . . The reasons which God has to love us are in Himself and therefore will not change. He gives us His love not for a day but for ever. We have seen the unchangeableness of His love on the Cross, and there is the reason of all our hope. . . .

See, my Brethren, what a value this love of God gives to our souls: The sheep have been judged worthy of the death of the shepherd! This is what

the soul should think of herself; in herself she is nothing, but she is everything through God Who shed His blood to save her.

When the Good Shepherd is going to depart He will leave His souls in other hands. He sent, to lead them, a shepherd who had something of His own tenderness. He would leave His souls to another soul who would love them. To find that soul, He goes to the shore of the Lake of Tiberias. There He meets Peter who denied Him, and asks him that triple question, which reminds him of his weakness. It reminds him also of the greatness of the gift he has received and of the pardon his Master has granted him, and he hears three times this question: "Peter, dost thou love Me?"—It is Our Lord Who asks him, and the Apostle, overwhelmed by his fault, overwhelmed by his humility before his God Who has forgiven him, replies as with reproach: "But, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee!" And Jesus entrusts to him His sheep. He wished to confide them to a heart that would have pity on them, so He said to him: If thou lovest Me thou canst be shepherd; if thou lovest Me thou wilt love My sheep. Jesus confides the souls to whom He has given His life to shepherds who will see in those souls a means of paying their own debt to Him. In His tenderness for us, Jesus shapes the hearts of His shepherds on the model of His own heart. . . .

Jesus wishes His sheep-fold to be large. "I have other sheep which are not of this fold: them also

must I bring." The Pharisees see the Church so tiny, so limited! But you, my Brethren, see things very differently. There are souls who love Jesus, who seek Him, who are His without appearing to be, and there are many such. Some of these souls truly conceive Christ, and so often we ourselves do not know Him, we are without that love which creates the need of expending our life for those we love, like the love of the Good Shepherd. We enter with difficulty in that thought which has consoled so many souls: "My sheep know Me as I know them." It was necessary that Our Lord Himself should pursue His wandering sheep, and these souls may now say to themselves in the sadness of their heart: I may be one of His sheep: perhaps at this moment He is seeking me that I may know Him. And that thought will console them. And Our Lord will help them. He cannot know them without giving them something. Certain souls may say to others: "I have suffered since you have known me." But it is not the same in the case of Jesus, my Brethren; He will help us, He has loved us from the day He first knew us. Let us ask Him to know and love us more and more.

There, my Brethren, are a few thoughts which occur to me on this Gospel. The sheep look to Jesus. It should be the same in our case. He is there in His Tabernacle for each one of our souls, He is there in order to give Himself entirely to each of us. He has only one reproach to make us—that we do not give ourselves sufficiently to Him, that we do not spend

ourselves enough in His service, that we do not sufficiently warm our souls in His company, those souls for which He has shed His blood: our souls remain cold in His presence! O my Brethren, if He will only seek us, let us allow Him to do so! If He will only bring us home, let us acquiesce. If He will only feed our souls and communicate Himself to us through the plenitude of His gifts, oh, let us allow Him to feed us, let us allow Him to efface from our souls all the evil that He finds there and place there what is in His own heart—devotedness and gratitude.

IX

"ALL THAT YOU ASK IN MY NAME WILL BE GIVEN TO YOU"

What must we ask?

AT that time Jesus said to His disciples: "Verily, verily I say to you, all that you shall ask My Father in My Name He will give you. . . ."

My Brethren: we must go back to the circumstances in which these words were spoken. As you know, it was on the evening of the Last Supper that they issued from the Heart of Jesus. It was after having given Himself, in the effusion of His Heart, which He feels living in the hearts of His Apostles; it was at the moment when His Apostles bore Him within them that He urged them to pray in His Name. Little doubt indeed that they will be heard: Jesus is praying in their hearts, and He inspires them with the very thoughts, sentiments, desires, and sorrows which are in His own. He is living in them: they are, as it were, replicas of Jesus who are praying in the name of Jesus, that is to say, they are souls who are living by the life of Him Who has given Himself to them, souls who have received Jesus. This is the explanation of the

fruitfulness of their prayer. "All that you ask will be given you." Because Jesus is desiring in them and asking in them, because He puts into their hearts the love which is there. If this condition is fulfilled those who ask thus will be heard in virtue of the presence of the Divine Master.

You see here, my Brethren, the law of prayer. If prayer is to be heard it must be united to Jesus, animated by the same thoughts, the same sentiments, and made in His Name.

You will understand that that simple statement contains the limit of what we may ask of God. We cannot ask for anything contrary to the spirit of Jesus living in His Apostles. The soul cannot ask for satisfaction of her pride in the name of the God of the Crib, present in the humility of the Eucharist. She cannot ask for the satisfaction of her egotism in the name of the God of the Tabernacle, Who has come to her heart from the Altar, in the name of Him Who is stripped of all and continues to give Himself to all. Nor can you, in the name of Him Who has been crucified and Who still bears in the Eucharist the very marks of His Crucifixion and the sufferings of the Cross, in the name of Him Who bears His Cross in that form under which He gives Himself, offer a prayer animated by horror of sacrifice or the desire that it should be removed from you. We cannot ask, in the name of Him Who has ascended to Heaven and Who gives Himself in the Eucharist, with the promise of His Resurrection in order to detach us and draw us

up to Heaven in His company, for things which would make us love this earth as our final and definitive country. You see to what narrow limits your requests are reduced if you pray in the *name of Jesus living in Souls*.

We must seek first of all what Jesus sought, what He tells us Himself He sought. I came out from My Father to seek the world; I came out from My Father without leaving My Father, in order that the world might belong to Him; now I am leaving the world without departing from it, and I return to My Father. That is the circle in which the heart of Jesus lived. He sought for souls in order to give them to God, He returned to God in order to draw souls after Him. The heart of one who is associated with the mission of Jesus will come out from the Heavenly Father without leaving Him, to seek for souls in misery if they are far from God, and will then return to the Heavenly Father bringing with him the souls which he will present to Him. That is the divine circle in which our feelings, hopes, fears, most intimate anxieties should move; a circle which begins with God and ends in God and moves in the Heaven to which we are called. When Our Lord invites us to pray in His name He invites us to make the same petitions as His own. What can we ask for souls when we feel the Saviour living in our own, but the only things worthy of being absolutely desired, those which the Church asked for last Sunday: Grant that in the midst of the instability of earthly things our hearts

may remain fixed where true goods are to be found! Other goods may be asked for as the means of those supreme ones in proportion to the aim we set before us, under the reservation of Divine Providence, which employs means for our salvation which we do not suspect, means that are better and sometimes directly contrary to those that we perceive.

We ask at his death-bed for the life of one dear to us: Ah (we think), if God will hear us this soul will return to Him.—God judges otherwise. From the lips of this man, separated from what he loves best, there may issue blasphemies, words offensive to God. But let suffering do its work; the hand of God which hollows out the heart will bring it more surely to the good which you ask for it than the grace which you are asking. Let God be master of the soul's good: the Heart of Jesus desires more than you can what you are asking. In the Garden of Olives He prays under the express reservation of His Father's Will; He takes with Him to ask, with Him, like Him, the same things: Not what I will, Father, but what Thou willest.

Ask and you shall receive, that your joy may be perfect. Do not ask for things which only give an incomplete joy to the soul, things which you enjoy to-day and will have forgotten to-morrow, which do not arouse our gratitude for long. When you have asked for temporal blessings and have obtained them, have you been grateful for long? I leave you to ask your consciences. Is the heart, I appeal to your experience, more sensitive to gratitude or to need? Do you go to

God more when you have received something or when you are asking for something? I leave the answer to you.

Pious souls often say: I have received much and I am ungrateful, for I used to pray better when I had not obtained what I was asking for, when the misery of my heart showed me something which I needed of which I no longer appreciate the value. God is sometimes obliged, by our ingratitude, not to give us the things we ask for. He is obliged to refuse us if we are asking for a temporal grace which has no direct relation with the things which Jesus desires in the heart where He lives and where God wishes to be honoured as in a temple. Jesus in your heart can only ask for gifts which are for His glory, for the good of souls, for the glory of His Father, gifts which tend to a joy that is complete, graces which perfect the supernatural life in souls and urge them towards God. Our Lord goes on to address a reproach to His Apostles: Up till now you have asked for nothing in My Name.

He has a right to address this reproach to the hearts of many. Many are preoccupied with things which Jesus, in their hearts, could not ask for. Souls often ask—and this is largely a fault of pious people—for what will tend to attach them to themselves. They ask for a pious movement, a beautiful thought which will make them eloquent before God; they would like to make a really eloquent and satisfactory speech to God in which their own cleverness would have a great part, and which would charm them. One feels one's

heart like a rock, and one longs to strike it with the rod of Moses, in order to feel in oneself an ever-springing source of devotion. My Brethren, is this to seek the glory of God? Is God really honoured by a beautiful thought? Is He not much more honoured by a will which is constant and persevering? Did He not demand of His Son to pray at greater length when all that His Son could say was, "*Not as I will, but as Thou wilt*"?

The immolation of the will, the offering of our insensibility, the act of the soul detesting herself, feeling the poverty which throws her at the feet of God and makes her implore the divine mercy for her human misery, is what, in times of dryness, procures our sanctification and God's glory. This is the meaning of that reproach of Jesus to us: You have not yet prayed in a spirit of abandonment, of sacrifice, and of humility which refers everything to God and keeps nothing for self.

We are invited to ask for much, for everything which may fill up the joy of our heart. Our Lord is so rich and does not wish that we should ask little. The higher our hope the more it will be crowned. God does not crown it when we only ask for little things. Let us ask for what is fitting when we have within us Our Lord, the God Who has paid for us, Him Whose cry on Calvary pierced Heaven and conquered the earth. In the name of Him Who has risen from the dead, Who has conquered death, Who is all-powerful, and Who can obtain everything, in His name one has

the right to ask for everything, and we must aim high. All we have to fear is not to ask enough, or not to aim high enough in our petitions.

There, my Brethren, are some thoughts on prayer. It must be made in the name of Jesus, animated by His spirit and by an ambition which He can admit. When Jesus is in a soul she has the right to ask for everything, to obtain everything, provided that what she asks for is worthy of the heart which asks and the Heart which longs to give.

X

"LET DOWN YOUR NETS FOR A DRAUGHT"

WHILE you were listening to this Gospel the horizon grew wider and the scene of which you were hearing the narration became something, as it were, constant and universal. It was no longer the Lake of Genesareth which you saw, it was the world; no longer St Peter's little fishing boat, but the Church; the scene had taken on immense proportions, and you saw what had once happened in this episode of Christ's life, happening every day in the Church which continues His life and His work. The Divine Master enters the boat of Peter: He chooses it out of all the rest. There were several boats, but this is the one He always chooses. From it He teaches the multitudes, He is in it when He stills the tempest, it was from this boat that Jesus called Peter to Him and made him walk on the sea: it is always the boat of Peter and no other. When Our Lord manifested Himself after the Resurrection, the Apostle Peter had been very guilty, and close to his boat was that of John, of John so faithful! Nevertheless Our Lord enters, as always, the boat of Peter and there invests him with his powers. It is the boat

of Peter, happier and more privileged than the boat which carried Cæsar, that carries Our Lord and His fortune, that is to say the happiness and the good fortune of the whole of humanity.

Our Lord, then, enters the boat of Peter and from there gives His teaching, which is far from the earth, higher than the earth. Jesus says to Peter : Draw out a little from the land. Not much, in order that the crowd may be able to hear Him, but a little. Our Lord did not teach in the manner of the Greek sages, who selected their disciples in small numbers and did not teach the multitudes. What comes from human wisdom is no part of the patrimony of the many, but the more a doctrine comes from God the more accessible it is to man : the highest doctrine of all is the most comprehensible. Such is the teaching given to the Church out of the boat of Peter.

It was still to Peter and not to the other disciples that Our Lord said : Launch out into the deep ; and not only on the Lake of Genesareth will Peter steer this boat of the Church, but all over the world. That boat will go out into the high seas through all obstacles and storms. It will go through the most terrible perils of Roman society in the presence of those who bear the sceptre of the world, and will do greater things there than ever Cicero and Seneca, with all their talent and their genius.

Let down your nets, said Our Lord. Now He is speaking to all. Peter is to direct operations, but all are to help him let down the nets, those blessed nets

which envelop us and bring us to Christ. Oh, how glad we should all of us be to enter them and never get free of them. It is Our Lord who says : " Cast down the net," it is from the boat of Peter that the net is thrown, it is the work of Christ which passes through the hands of His disciples. That is the daily experience of the Priest ; he trembles at the thought of what passes through his hands, at the thought of one who is greater than he.

We have laboured all the night and taken nothing. So hard is it to catch a soul ! There are those who have consecrated their whole life in devoted labour to take one soul, and they have not succeeded ! Indeed, it is a work worthy of God and the mission which He has given His Apostles through all the ages. Let down your nets. Spread them widely over souls, so as to take them all and save them, for it is only if they are taken that they are saved. St Peter works with Christ, and the quantity of fish that he takes is so enormous that the nets are broken and the disciples are afraid at sight of the wonder which has been worked by their hands. Our Lord reassures them and says to them : Fear not, henceforward you shall be fishers of men.

This miracle is renewed in all ages. And when St Peter let down his net for the first time at Jerusalem and converted five thousand men, he must have remembered his first miraculous fishing and that word of His Master.

It is the sight of the grandeur of this work, of the

power of Him Who thus calls them to accomplish it, that attracts the fishermen of the Gospel: they do not stop at the gift, they go straight to the Giver, Who will give infinitely more than He promises; they arise, they leave all and follow Him. The disciples left all, and it was little enough they left, little enough indeed! But generosity is not measured by the extent of one's gift; one is generous if one gives what one has, whatever it may be, with a great love. What makes the value of the gift is the generosity of the giver's movement; it is putting all one's soul into what one gives, and withdrawing it from what one abandons. The disciples had little to give; but had they had much they would have given it as willingly.

You know what Scripture says: When a man has given all the riches of his house in exchange for the love of God, he has nevertheless given nothing. All that we have is such a trifle in comparison with what God is, with what He promises, with what He gives us, with what we find in Him, that if we give everything for Our Lord we have nevertheless given nothing.

That was what the disciples felt when they left everything to follow the Divine Master. Had not He left everything to come and seek them, to come and raise what was fallen and save what was lost? He had come on the earth to clothe Himself with humanity with all its humiliations, its miseries, its sufferings, to seek us, to love us, and to save us! If we look in this way at Our Lord we can see nothing but Him. . . .

And the disciples left all and followed Him, and, following in their footsteps, legions of men have also left all to follow Him. . . .

Master, we have laboured all the night and have taken nothing; but at Thy word I will let down the net. How many others had laboured during the night of Paganism before the coming of Our Lord: Plato, Aristotle, those great spirits whose teaching was so beautiful, they had laboured and for how poor a result. Nothing is more astonishing than the sterility of their efforts, if it be not the fecundity of the enterprise of the Apostles, accomplished by such poor hands and brains!

St Peter had laboured all the night without success, it was hardly likely that the morning's fishing should be more fortunate; and yet at the word of Our Lord he throws out his nets. Thus should we also act: we should work not in prospect of success but in obedience to God; this is the best disposition for us to be in to ensure His doing something for us. St Peter is the model we should put before our souls: the primary condition of the action of God in a soul is that she should be thoroughly convinced of her own incapacity, which indeed she knows by experience; but this perception should neither astonish nor discourage her—that would be a detestable disposition—she must accept her own nullity.

"It is true, O Lord, I have done nothing, I am incapable of doing anything without Thee," and then recognising her impotence, the soul must add with

confidence : " On Thy word, I will let down the net." We have laboured all night without taking anything : how many times we have said and felt this. " Lord, I have laboured and succeeded in nothing. Many a time have I thrown the net without success. But if Thou biddest me throw it once more, I will do so on Thy word, for Thy sake, not for my own, relying on Thee and not on myself ; I am too well aware of my own sterility to count on myself." Let such be our words, and in spite of dryness, disgust, nay, profound boredom in the service of God, we shall remain faithful workers.

When St Peter saw the miraculous draught of fish which Our Lord obtained through his hands, he was astonished and afraid, he understood what he was and what his Master was ; that night of unfruitful effort had been no waste of time for him. Would to God that our failures taught us what we are, or rather what we are not ! When God tries us by showing us our own barrenness, we shall not waste our time if we manage to learn the lesson of humbling and confounding ourselves before Him, of glorifying God, and throwing ourselves on our knees with Peter and crying out with Him : *Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man !*—Do you not see ? Infinite Purity draws near me, Infinite Purity bends down to me, to me a sinner ! There is indeed a chasm between the Divine Word and flesh and blood. But love has filled it up, love has filled up the chasm between Master and disciple. Jesus said to him : " Fear not "—the

humbler the recipient the greater the blessing—" in future thou shalt be a fisher of men." That was the reward of his humility.

The miraculous draught of fish secured by the command of Jesus and the reply of St Peter : " Depart from me O Lord," is the story of what happens daily in the Church. It is Our Lord Who by His word works miracles. The Priest is the perpetual witness of His power ; when he passes his days lifting his absolving hands over penitent souls and when he sees the wonders of the Divine life wrought by his ministry independently of himself, he is seized with wonder and fear at the sight of the Infinite which has passed through his hands, and cries out with Peter : " Depart from me, O Lord, for I am a sinful man." The sure mark of the passage of God and the Divine life is humility, and when souls come and speak to me of their intercourse with God in prayer, I ask them : Are you humble ? There is the test of your communion with God. God always leaves the mark of His passage in the soul in the form of humility, that feeling of fear united to a feeling of confidence which makes us at once withdraw and advance.

XI

"JUDGE NOT THAT YE BE NOT JUDGED"

AT Rome, the Prætor at his entrance on his period of office announced the manner in which he intended to dispense justice. Here the Supreme Judge of the living and the dead gives us the warning: Judge not if you do not wish to be judged.

When one is alone, face to face with oneself, one cannot but be afraid at the thought of the judgement of God. No doubt He knows the clay of which we are formed, our natural weaknesses and miseries, nevertheless the thought of the judgement of God must terrify us if we are capable of any reflection whatever. I am not speaking of the grave faults we may have committed—though are we so sure they have been pardoned, have we shed tears enough for them, have we done sufficient penance for them, are they indeed effaced? I know not—it is unnecessary to contemplate grave faults, it is sufficient to retire into our hearts, to observe their weaknesses, their falls, their perpetual infidelities, that evil will which gains ground in spite of our struggles, that egoism which recovers as fast as we disarm it, those leanings to evil

which constantly reawaken, the whole of that travail always going on within us to turn us away from God and bring us back to ourselves. Ah, Brethren, self-examination, the consciousness of what we really are, the spectacle of the poor human heart constantly falling back by its own weight, all this may well make us fear the judgement of God.

Perhaps persons who come to Confession and find nothing of which they can accuse themselves have examined themselves without much care. Even if such a person has no grave faults on his conscience, there is always his soul with all its evil tendencies, all its natural wickedness, to cast down before the feet of God, begging Him to renew it, for all there is evil, all has to be remade. A man who examines his life and finds there no page that he wishes to efface, knows not what he says. How many lines and pages there are in the book of my life that I would efface if I could! But, even if I have not committed flagrant sins, it is enough for me to see myself as I know I really am, to lose all self-confidence and placing all my hope in the Heart of God, to cry to Him from the depth of the pit that my faults have dug: *De profundis clamavi!* We shall never sufficiently understand that all our security lies in the goodness of God, in His mercy, that our sole hope of salvation is to throw ourselves blindly into His arms. *Si iniquitates observaveris Domine*, Lord, if Thy Divine Gaze takes account of everything even to the weighing in the balance of all my infidelities, *Domine quis sustinebit?* What human soul can endure that

gaze ? We need all Thy mercy and all Thy clemency to dare to remain in Thy presence.

This consideration alone should prevent us from ever judging our neighbours. He Who assures us that if we do not judge others, we shall not ourselves be judged, is Himself our Judge ; thus we hold in our own hands the measure with which it will be measured unto us. This is just, but also how merciful ! *Give and it shall be given to you with the same measure that you have used.* . . .

Where is the soul who does not feel the perpetual need of God ? If I know myself at all, I am aware of my perpetual misery, I live on alms, on what I get from day to day. Daily my life is disappearing, it only holds by a thread ; if at certain moments God had not come to renew and raise it up, death was at my door. I experience this perpetual need of receiving, and God before Whose Face I stand, is the Being Who gives, I live on His benefits. How strict, then, is my obligation to give myself not only on account of my poverty but in return for what I have received ! Our hearts should always be tormented by a longing to be grateful. Let us thank God that He is willing to ask something of us and allows us to pay Him in the person of our brothers.

Nothing is more revolting than the spectacle of that servant in the Gospel to whom his Master had forgiven an enormous debt and who himself remains without pity for his brother who owes him a trifle. If we call down God's mercy on our heads ; if at the

sight of our moral misery, we fear His judgements, let us be kind ourselves, let us be merciful and not judge our brethren.

Our divine Master continues to speak and His words, so kind and indulgent in pardon, grow ironical. *If a blind man lead another, will they not both fall into the ditch?* We find a like irony in the mouth of our Creator in the early days of the world: "Here is Adam become like to one of us"! So the Son of man also speaks ironically. . . . How blind we have been in our malicious judgements of others. How often I have judged my neighbour wrongly! The idea of judgement should disgust me if I do not wish to be ridiculous in my own sight.

Why do you see the mote in your brother's eye when you do not see the beam in your own? What we should see in the world which is put before us in order to show us something of the beauty and grandeur of God is what is great and beautiful. And that is what we should see in our neighbour, that image of the Holy Trinity on which our own soul has been formed and which it reveals more or less clearly. It has often taken me a long time to see through the disguise of external defects, the beauty hidden by God in a soul: that beauty is what we should see. . . .

But if you fail in charity, that is not what you see. You do not see the quality that makes the soul loveable, great, and noble; what you see is that tiny imperceptible mote. Your eye is so subtle, so experienced in detecting a tiny scrap of evil! *How can*

you say to your brother : let me take the mote out of your eye, while you do not see the beam in your own? Even if you are without the defect that you observe in him, is not that malignant look, that constant readiness to see evil truly a beam in your own eye ? And how rash one must be to scold and try to reform others when one has no mission to do so ! The instruction I give in the Confessional makes me feel ashamed when I look into my own soul ; and I confess that there was a special need for Our Lord to exhort those who had the painful and difficult duty of warning others. If one realised the necessity of so many precautions, the necessity of a tender humility of compassion and charity involved in the attempt to reform others, one would never have the courage to begin. *Remove first the beam that is in thine own eye.* . . . No one is so severe towards others as those who are lax with themselves : if you wish to reform your neighbour begin by working on yourself, by removing that beam, that is, that lack of charity and humility which makes you constitute yourself a teacher of others, and when you see how much trouble and time are necessary in order to correct a single fault in yourself, then you may set about curing your brother.

But when you know all that you will lose the wish to do so.

XII

"RENDER TO CÆSAR THE THINGS WHICH ARE CÆSAR'S"

MY Brethren,

It is very rarely that Our Lord touches on the burning topic to which you have been listening in to-day's Gospel, and you see how briefly He does so. He points out what we owe to Cæsar, He asks us to pay that debt in the name of what we owe to God. Let us see what is the meaning of these words which have been greatly misunderstood.

The Pharisees find Him with the Herodians. These two classes of men were absolutely divided on the question of civil authority. The Pharisees did not think that the purely civil authority of Herod could be legitimately admitted; they were subject to it but threw it out on conscientious grounds. The object of the cult of the Herodians was the first Herod. Herod, with an eye on the Roman authority, had made that authority acceptable among his followers; they considered that what went well for themselves was well enough in general, and that their religion was that of the government which showered favours upon them. These two quite different sets of enemies conspired to circumvent Our Lord and lay a trap for Him. The

Pharisees teach that nothing is due to Cæsar, they will accuse Jesus if He demands the payment of the tribute. The Herodians, on the other hand, will accuse and ruin Him if He refuses to pay what is due to Cæsar.

They approach Him with seductive flattery. It is hard to refuse homage based on justice such as that which the Pharisees come to pay to Our Lord ; " We know that Thou art just in Thy words and that Thou announcest the truth without acceptation of persons."

My Brethren, if we penetrate to the depth of our own heart we see that our true enemies are those who flatter the secret dispositions of our soul. They degrade and ruin us, we must be on our guard, and if we will be sincere we shall see that we have got a great deal more from those who do not indulge us but who speak the truth to our faces, who help us to be good and to develop our intimate qualities in perfect sincerity. Our Lord, interrogated on a point of doctrine involving a political question (a ground on which He never went Himself), makes this oft-quoted reply ; He says while showing them the coin : " Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's, and to God the things that are God's." He thus distinguishes the two powers, as it is said. It is true ; but remark that in thus distinguishing them He has not separated them, He has united them. If you wish to pay to God what is due to Him, pay Cæsar what you owe him, and if you would render his due to Cæsar, be sure you pay to God what is due to Him.

Here, then, is a firm and immutable principle, if

you wish to give a *raison d'être* for your obedience you must try and see what will ennoble it, and if you wish to keep men the subjects of a just government which does not degenerate, as with the Romans, into slavery and idolatry, base your authority on a divine principle.

Our Lord insists on obedience to the civil power in the name of God. You cannot pay to God what is due to Him, unless you also pay what is due to authority.

Authority is of divine right, because man has been made by God a social creature, he was born in order to develop the natural qualities which can only find their exercise in the social state ; and it is because every society implies an authority which maintains it, that that authority is of divine establishment, for it is the guarantee of that state by which human nature enters into the paths of God. As far as the Pharisees are concerned the answer is clear : Render to Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's and you will render to God the things that are God's.

The Apostles have confirmed it in their writings. They often repeat it because they are speaking to Jews only recently subjected to the Roman authority. St Peter and St Paul say in their turn : Submit to the power of the state, because thus God orders you to do. Do not submit because of external constraint, but for the sake of God, for the sake of Christ. That is the principle in the name of which the Apostle demands obedience to recognised authority. It is a duty of conscience, a duty imposed by God, which must not

be fulfilled through fear. That is the constant doctrine of the Apostles.

At the same time as obedience is demanded in the name of God, the civil power learns the price at which it can maintain order in society. The civil power is the image of Providence, its ideal is in the government of the Divine Master, the civil power is established by God not with reference to the persons exercising it, or with reference to a particular form of government, but with reference to its basis. Power is of divine right because God has instituted it for the good of society.

The government of Providence does not mean the enslavement of man by his fellow-man. When God said to Adam " Dominare " He added immediately that His rule was to be over beings of an inferior creation. It is all very well for the heathen, said Our Lord to His Apostles, to have kings who exploit them ; it shall not be so among you. If you obey let it be in the name of Christ, in the name of Him Who, being a King, made Himself a servant, being great, made Himself small, Who came not to be served but to serve. Authority belongs to those whose duty it is to watch with solicitude over others ; obedience to those who are the objects of this vigilance and care. St Thomas says that Princes may be called not only the ministers of God, to Whom they are responsible, but also ministers of the people for whom they are responsible. They are no more established by the people than the father is by his children ; they are established for the production of the Good, the glory of the Prince is to

be a manifestation of Providence, he is the servant of those to whom he issues his commands. This is the Christian ideal of civil authority, of the Prince who remembers the account which he will have to give to God for those who are under his charge. He is responsible for the temporal destiny of the Church; it is his duty to let her pass on her way, to facilitate her pilgrimage here below, to speed forward that procession of souls on its way to Heaven to become the Church triumphant. This is the goal, the mission, the beauty, the ideal of Christian government, it does not consist in the exercise of empire as such but in the ruler's responsibility before God.

As Our Lord's words indicate the principle of obedience—it is for God's sake that we are to obey Cæsar—they also show us its dignity and beauty. It is not his success that gives a Prince faithful subjects who will not connect their obedience with the fortunes of Cæsar, but with their duty to God. Miserable and unworthy was the obedience of the Jews who cried out: We have no other King but Cæsar. Miserable indeed, for that cry was hurled against God. On the other hand, those who obey "in Christ" are happy and great; those who say in his own words: You would have no power, if it were not given to you from above! The true principle of obedience is neither interest nor ambition, the desire to reach the shadow of power; that leads to idolatry and degrades a man.

You see how Our Lord distinguishes in the comparison which He makes of these two things. Your

obedience is to be measured on the rights of God. You will obey Cæsar in so far as he is not against God, that is up to conscience, exclusively. Obedience is thus limited: we should obey Cæsar in everything that does not offend against the law of God; the two powers, God's and Cæsar's, are distinguished. Obedience to Cæsar is clearly demanded of Christian souls. God is present to Cæsar in order to show him the ideal of government, its sanctity and responsibility; and God is present to the submissive soul in order to show her the principle on which obedience depends. He only who obeys God renders a reasonable obedience to Cæsar, and the limits of that obedience extend only as far as the rights of God, exclusively. Otherwise we should make a god of Cæsar and our civil obedience would be a slavery.

Our Lord has said no more on this subject. The same question has been asked of the Church on her pilgrims' journey through the world and with the intention of laying the same trap for her. Princes have found her too independent because she protects the rights of the human conscience, the rights of God, the freedom of passage of the Church on her journey from Earth to Eternity. People have thought that the Church favoured despotism to the point of idolatry, thinking that the throne was made to support the altar, and the sword to defend it. You see how false is this double criticism, for the Church does not demand the idolatry which Cæsar claims; she is not on the side either of Absolutism or of independence as

such, she points out to the Prince what he should respect and to the people what they should venerate in the Prince.

We may draw a more practical thought from this Gospel. Our Lord bids them bring Him a coin stamped with the likeness of Cæsar. In this coin I seem to see the human soul stamped with the likeness of God, that soul to whom He has come in order to re-stamp His image, on whom He has written His Name in letters of blood. On that golden coin, we must be able to read the name of God Who has restored the soul to such beauty that His own likeness is indistinguishable from the soul's likeness. Whose is the image visible on that heart lost in its egotistic thoughts, plunged into the satisfaction of the senses, attached to the creature? Is it the likeness of God? And to whom does the inscription legible in that soul refer? Do we read there the name of God, or the name of another? I leave these thoughts with you. Examine your souls. Ah, would that we could always read there the name of God Who created you, the name of Jesus Who saved you, there in a heart which loves what Jesus loved; souls; in a heart detached from self and ready for every sacrifice. Let us carry the name of God written in our hearts, unmistakeably. That is our true destiny. As the Roman coin circulated everywhere the name and likeness of the Master of the world, so let us circulate in the world the name of God, the holy name of Jesus.

XIII

"LORD, IF THOU WILT, THOU CANST HEAL ME"

WE will make together a few simple reflections on this Gospel. It tells the story of a leper who came to Our Lord and said to Him: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst heal me."

"If Thou wilt"! Assuredly He will, for that is the one purpose with which He came to earth and became man. His every word tells us so, His every action expresses this one purpose, to save our souls. The Son of Man did not come to condemn the world but to save it. He came to save that which was lost. He spent His whole life for that purpose. There He is on the Cross with His arms ever outstretched, to receive us, to obtain our pardon: "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do. . . . To-day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." And if He gives His Mother to Humanity personified in St John, it is in order that Humanity may be saved by her intercession.

Our Divine Master, then, wills our salvation. He wills it expressly: it is we who do not will it. We will it to-day and willingly give it up to-morrow; we should like to will it but we cannot make a final act of will, and, above all, we do not carry out the consequences

of our will. " If you will, you can." No doubt God could have made us will efficaciously and victoriously. He has not done so : it is a mystery, nothing remains for us but to will, to pray, and to count on grace. Has not Our Lord done all that was necessary ? He did not content Himself with saying : " I will, be healed," He stretched his two hands out on the Cross and keeps them stretched over humanity to save it throughout the ages.

The rest of this Gospel relates another cure, granted this time to the prayer of a Centurion. He was a Roman without the customary contempt of his nation for the Jews. He was no enemy of theirs ; one of the Evangelists mentions that he had contributed money towards the building of a Synagogue. He was a simple, good, upright man, the sort of soul Our Lord loves. In reading his words to Jesus : " I say to my servant, do this, and he does it," more than one of us may have smiled and reflected : He was a fortunate man, would that I could say the same ! Yes, but if such servants are rare, there are not many masters like our Centurion, knowing how to give orders, knowing how to use their authority justly, wisely, and well. As to giving orders, he was a thorough Roman, they were brief and clear, but his heart was good. He does not hesitate to come himself to seek relief for his suffering servant from Our Lord. . . . I cannot bear those people whose acts are out of harmony with their words, some strange mystical jargon which has no root in their heart is on their lips. It is not those who say

" Lord, Lord," whom God loves, but those who do something, who are good and devoted to their brothers.

What a true appreciation this Centurion had of what Our Divine Master was, of what he was himself! " Lord, I am not worthy." The Church has found no better words than these to place on our lips at the moment when Our Lord is about to descend into our soul, when the Priest elevates the Sacred Host and says : " Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him Who taketh away the sins of the world ! " . . . What can we do when we are in the presence of that Power, that Mercy, that Goodness but recognise our unworthiness ? What else can we say at that moment, when emotion fills the heart, when it is really touched and violently moved by love ? It is not the moment to make a speech, the best eloquence is to have none, we can express nothing but the sentiment of our indignity : " Lord, I am not worthy ! "—But if you are not worthy, why draw near ?—Ah, the answer is that God wills it : " *Oportet.*" One day Jesus met a man who was a publican and a sinner, and He said to him : " To-day I must lodge in thy house." He knows well what we are, He knows that we are sinners, and nevertheless—for that very reason indeed—He wishes to lodge with us. What, we ask ourselves, can He possibly find in so poor and wretched a hovel as our soul ? It is His Will to come, His caprice, one may say. . . . I will strike my breast and say : *Domine non sum dignus !* and I will come obediently to His Holy Table with the words : *Sed tantum dic verbo et sanabitur anima mea.*

XIV

"THE LORD JESUS WAS LED INTO THE DESERT BY THE HOLY SPIRIT"

MY Brethren: in these few words which I come here to speak to you, and in which I hope to do a little good to your souls, I wish to speak of the solitude to which Our Lord summons you following in His footsteps. Where He is we must go, we must place our own feet in His footprints. So we too must enter the desert, and it is there that the Church calls us during Lent.

I know perfectly well what you will say: that you are familiar with solitude and that Priests often make mistakes about people living in the world. Are we not familiar (you will say) with solitude the day after a social celebration? Do we not experience solitude after a deception, after ingratitude, after injustice? Are there not moments when one is alone, completely isolated, when one curses everything? I know solitude well.

Yes, my Brethren, I know that that kind of solitude is familiar to you, but it is not of that kind that I wish to speak. The solitude experienced on the morrow of a false joy, at the moment of deception is bitter indeed,

and you know it only too well. And you also know well how bad it is for you, for it is there that you meet the strongest of your temptations, that fundamental sadness which makes you call on stones, though you know all the time that they are but stones, to become bread. It is in that moment of solitude that you try to find nourishment in what gives you no life, that you seek support in what cannot sustain you. The moment of isolation is the moment of temptation, it is in the desert of deception that you long to cast yourself down on the rocks. *Mitte te deorsum.* There is a kind of vertigo that calls souls at certain moments to throw themselves into the depths of the abyss ; we know we shall fall and get impelled by some unhealthy emotion which we shall regret later, we cannot help obeying the voice which says : *Mitte te deorsum.* Hurl yourself into the abyss opened under your feet by sadness : you will be broken to pieces, but hurl yourself down all the same.

It is not of this evil sadness which leads you where you would never wish to go in cold blood that I wish to speak to you, but rather of the solitude into which the Holy Spirit calls you, a desert which will be sweet to you, though bitterness and sorrow are often met with at its entrance. This solitude contains the gaze of God, the glance of Jesus which has never ceased to keep you in sight in spite of your own forgetfulness. *There* is the sweetness of that memory which at certain moments of life, on the morrow of suffering, has brought you back to yourselves, like a ray of hope

before your eyes which caused you to say : " Oh, if I wished, I could do something ; all is not dead in me, I still feel moving in my soul the delicate fibres of living feelings." As it were the voice of God calling you to the desert where He has prepared for you a sweet surprise, joy that is real, where He will send you, as to His Son, His angels of consolation to cheer and sustain you. That is the true solitude.

You will find yourselves there face to face with your faults : yes, but also with His mercy. While the soul weeps sadly, stricken, humiliated, prostrate with sorrow at the sight of her faults as they appear in the light of God, she at the same time sees His mercy so much greater than all her sins, so much deeper than the abyss into which she has fallen, that face to face with her sin and His mercy she can but smile while she weeps. I can assure you, my Brothers, and all Priests will tell you the same, nothing is sweeter than to weep for one's sins with hope in the presence of Our Lord.

Solitude is the home where we find the memories of cherished beings, the home of those sweet emotions which we once lived through and which now revive for us, for in them our heart lived so keenly in all that was beautiful, true, and elevated. In those days our heart sought the beautiful in the true, above, not below—well, we can find all that once more and see our youth bloom again. It may be the memory of a father or a mother, of someone who has spoken to us, in whom we saw the beauty of life, the memory of a

soul open to God Who beautified and enlarged it and made Heaven in it by His presence. Such a memory as this, my Brothers, is speedily recalled, nor does God take long in solitude to act, to change and remake everything.

Is it not some moment of solitude, of recollection, that seems the best memory of your life ? Is it not at such moments that you have really lived, that mere things seemed trifling to you and that your soul formed an aspiration towards Heaven ? Is it not, then, that you feel yourselves morally better, for a soul grows good by rising, whereas the soul that drags along the earth enmeshed in all that stunts and degrades can but be evil. If you succeed in making this sweet solitude in your heart, God will quickly act in its depths : He does not take long to infuse hope into the most despairing soul, the soul that says : " It is too late," the soul that thinks she can only form intellectual ideas and that the feelings that would give her back her youth can never return. Very quickly God speaks in the depth of our hearts. You are called to share the solitude of Jesus where you will meet not yourselves but Him.

Perhaps solitude may awaken in you a series of temptations. It is very possible that the first moment of recollection may be followed by a clear view of your conscience and that entering into yourself you may find everything in disorder. I beg of you, do not turn back. If temptation presents itself, push it away, like Our Lord. Note how exquisitely appropriate to all

the dangerous moments of the soul, are His replies to the evil one !

If your soul is tempted to seek her food where there is none, reply : " Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of God." Indeed the soul lives on all that elevates her, that makes her beautiful, on the self-sacrifice which infuses joy through the wound that it causes, the soul lives on all that unites her to God for whom she is made. That is the true food of the soul, and the vengeance of the soul in grief who has been unjustly treated is to be good and thereby show that she belongs to God.

If the tempter whispers to you : " *Mitte te deorsum*," make the reply of Jesus : " Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God." Lord, I will not remain in an occasion of sin, I was deceived as to my strength, I did not understand the words : " *When I am weak, then am I powerful.*" Your weakness will not oblige God to work a miracle ; the miracle of grace will be to make you fly the occasion of sin, and not to save you from it when you have thrown yourself into it.

The third temptation is pride. That pride which lowers, diminishes, and degrades you, making you dependent on everyone and everything, on the fact that a word is not said to you, that a particular compliment is not paid you, that someone has or has not some opinion about you—ah, Lord, how well Thou didst reply to this suggestion in those words : " Thou shalt adore and serve God only. . . ." It is in the

service of God that the soul finds her liberty, her joy, her well-being, and truly lives. Such, my Brethren, are the replies which you will make to your temptations and you will find them on the lips of Our Lord. If you do so, a heavenly influence will descend on you, help will come to you from God to refresh you and make you glad. The angels come to the assistance of the faithful soul who seeks God and give her heavenly consolation, pouring their balm into her heart wounded in the strife. You will enjoy a foretaste of Heaven in the peace of victory.

XV

"LORD, IT IS GOOD FOR US TO BE HERE"

"LORD, it is good for us to be here, let us build three tabernacles, one for Thee, one for Moses, and one for Elias" (Matt. vii. 4). You have just read these words, my Brethren, in the Gospel of to-day, the Second Sunday in Lent, the Gospel of the Transfiguration. They are the words of St Peter. The Divine Master had taken him out of the midst of the tumult of life, out of the confusion of the world, and had said to him: "Come with Me." Peter climbed with his Master, and as he mounted higher, something seemed to grow in him. When he reached Mount Tabor, he saw Him shining with light, and the Lord appeared to him between Moses and Elias, between the Law and the Promise. His Person appeared transfigured, infinitely beautiful. And so great and so pure was the joy in Peter's soul, uniting in one flame all his noblest and most elevated faculties, that he cried out: "How good it is to be here, here let us pitch our tent."

Have we often said that, my Brethren? Have you often said: "It is good to be here"? It has been rarely enough that you have said it, and hardly ever

have you added : " Ah, if we could only stay here, we are out of the world, at least."—Why is this? It is because we do not rise and follow our Divine Master, because we do not climb, because we look at life on its insignificant side, because we habitually live low down without ever lifting our minds or hearts, because we are glad to confuse truth with ugliness, because our reading is confined to accounts of human turpitude, and because our conversations with our fellows never lead us to the consideration of the beautiful, the true, the eternal, those fair and great things on which we should do well to meditate. And our one consolation in this stunted existence in which we can see only sadness and ugliness is the thoughts of our clear-sightedness. We find self-glory in saying : " Everything is dark, dwarfed, and painful, but at least we are not deceived, we see life as it is."

This, my Brethren, is indeed what often happens because we do not climb, because we stay below in the valley and avoid everything which might enlarge and disengage our souls, which might widen our horizon and give us a more distant and higher view of things ; we do not follow Jesus, that is why we are sad. And, as I have said, all our circumstances shut us up in this hideous and desolate life ; our books, our social intercourse, even our curiosity ; all tends to present life to us in this aspect. The contemporary human being seems to pass his time in seeking out what will sadden him, wound his heart, darken his horizon, smother his soul, and make the path of his destiny so narrow that

nothing good can grow there. Yes, in the world of to-day everything is organised in view of making our life lose its elevated meaning, of smothering our souls.

Nevertheless all this is not really so. Truth is not there, in that disfigurement, that travesty of life which makes it so hideous. Far from it. There is no one who, emerging from a situation in which dignity has been forgotten, after the commission of a fault, after a conversation which has left remorse in the soul, after any life-diminishing, life-lowering experience, does not say to himself : " Yes, I am worth more than that. There is something better in me than what I have been showing to others, I am worth more than people think ! . . ." Such sadness brings us face to face with the infinite need of our soul, that need of giving itself, that power of love that in our experience always loses its way. We feel in ourselves a certain élan, certain drawings which the world misunderstands and which are worth more than what it esteems. There is something there. Not genius, but the need of self-devotion, of elevation, of love, of doing good, of seeing life *en beau et en grand*, of piercing through time to eternity. It seems to me that the world is wholly occupied in lowering and diminishing these sentiments that we feel in the depths of the soul.

My Brethren, that is the history of many souls who live in narrow spiritual circumstances and who can scarcely breathe, because instead of mounting they descend, because God has never permitted and will never permit that the human soul shall be happy at

any lower level than Himself, for Whom she has been made.—There is a certain sadness, a remorse, certain aspirations which awaken within her and do not allow her to fall asleep on the bed of discouragement. If you hear this voice, do not silence it ; do not say that clearsightedness consists in seeing everything to be sad and ugly.

No ; Jesus must take us and lift us above that passion which holds us captive, above the egoism that shuts us up in ourselves, above the pride which stifles us, above that love which consumes the best part of our life, and which is not worthy to have all the riches of our heart spent on it. We must raise ourselves by the sacrifice which God has so long been asking of us, we must seek our happiness not in our own ease, but in the expenditure of that superfluous energy of the soul which, if it is not employed, becomes its most intimate torment. We must see life as Jesus has made it, we must seek rest where it is to be found, in simplicity, humility, patience, the sacrifice demanded of us, in what frees and purifies the soul, in what in its primary aspect afflicts us, but nevertheless gives us peace and enables us to breathe in the depths.

When you are face to face with nature, you feel better. You say you find repose in nature after frequenting man. You feel still better at the side of a sufferer, more especially if you have the joy of doing him good, of bringing a smile on lips that had forgotten how to smile.—You feel better in the presence of the dead which awakens problems of the next world and

gives rise to saddening and yet healthy thoughts, heart-piercing thoughts which nevertheless we love, because God reveals Himself in grief, and illuminates the divine in the depths of the soul.

Well, my Brethren, you must allow yourselves to be led. Jesus takes St Peter by the hand to lead him upwards ; you must mount with them. You do not see where you are going . . . ? How can you see from your present point of view where you are proposing to remain ? That would truly be a miracle. You have not a living, ardent, loving faith, but you surely have enough to say : " I will arise." Your life is such, your habits of spirit, soul, and heart are such that you cannot have the lively faith that moves all the forces of the soul in one direction ; do not wait for that faith, be content with what you have : *Venite*. Come to the call of Jesus, make the sacrifice which He asks of you, turn to the direction of the Voice which has called you for so long—*Venite et videte*, when you have come, you will see the attraction of the goal, what happiness it gives, how truly St Peter spoke when he said : *Bonum est nos hic esse*—Ah, yes, Lord, where Thou art, it is good to be with Thee. To be with Thee in self-sacrifice, with Thee free of the world and men, with Thee in the expenditure of self, for there art Thou, my Saviour ! *Gustate et videte*, you will taste after having come. Then the soul undergoes a sort of transfiguration. The things of life take on another meaning. We had thought that everything was organised for our degradation and we find, on the

contrary, everything organised for our uplifting. Sadness sets us free, sacrifice purifies us, our legitimate affections are weighted with the supernatural and the divine ; all that is deep and pure reveals something of the eternal ; our heart is made for Heaven, and all winds favour it on its journey to the shore of the blessed life.

The last words will also come true. Let us put up here our tent. O Lord, it is here I wish to pitch my tent, and the longer Thou remainest, the longer I wish also to remain ; even in the state of sacrifice in which it is Thy Will to keep me, I wish to remain with Thee, my God.

XVI

" JESUS DROVE OUT A DEVIL AND THE DEVIL WAS DUMB "

THE conversations of Our Lord belong to another period, they have no relation to the world in which we live?—You are wrong, my Brethren, look a little closer, listen to these words and you will see that they belong to every time, that they are related to the world in which you live.

You have lived sometime; tell me, have you not found many souls resembling this dumb man in the Gospel? Souls who give out no longer that heavenly note which every soul made by God should give out when touched? Have you not sometimes said: "Poor soul, have you forgotten everything, do you love nothing at all? Does no chord vibrate within you?" Indeed there are many of such souls in the world, they are touched and there is no response, nothing is heard of that divine sound which every soul, like a harp, as the Fathers say, should give out under the touch of grace. Have you not sometimes met in man something which suggests in a way an infinity of evil? Have you not come across monsters who reveal in the depth of their heart an abyss of vice

and malice? Would you dare say that there are not in the depth of the human being certain things which seem to be diabolical, so frightening and perverse do they appear? Admit that to-day as eighteen hundred years ago it is necessary that the Lord should go among these dumb souls, that the Redeemer should come as a strong man armed in order to drive the devil out of the possession of the souls in whom he dwells!

Not only must You pass, O Divine Saviour, but You must remain with us. *Mane nobiscum, Domine, quoniam advesperascit.* Remain in this poor world on which evening is fast falling and on which darkness is gathering through the pouring forth of sadness and the absence of hope, in that night in which voices are heard which terrify us because we know not whence they come, because they give forth no human sound. See, O Lord, it is not sufficient that Thou shouldst pass among us, take up Thy abode in the midst of us! Come into my poor soul, which has been silent for so long, whence nothing good has come out for years, in which no heavenly instinct can any more be awakened, which has not been able either to speak to Thee or to reply to Thy words. Come and make Thy power felt. Let my soul say something, let it remember the past, let it love something which will elevate and enlarge it! I am present, O Lord, in the person of this poor dumb man; make me speak, I beg of Thee, make my heart full of gratitude to reply to Thy benefits and submissive to the trials Thou sendest it,

make my heart and soul to give out the responsive sound which Thou wishest to hear. Dwell with us, O Lord !

And Jesus stops. His work is not yet complete, He is with us and He wishes that His work should also be ours. Souls there are whom Our Lord touches and who give back the sound which Jesus wishes to hear, souls who in their depths practise heroic virtues, souls to whom Jesus speaks and who answer Him. Thanks to God there are still beautiful souls in the world. A Priest who receives so many confidences and who comes in contact with so much evil, ought to be like the doctor in a hospital overwhelmed with sadness at the sight of the evils which attack humanity, but the contrary is the case ; such a feeling as that does not often touch him ; and every day he has to rejoice, to praise God for the grandeur to which humanity can rise, for the resources which still remain in the depth of souls apparently the most completely lost. He recognises the hand of the Divine Saviour Who has distributed abundantly the grace solicited by indefatigable prayer, devotion, and sacrifice.

Do not, my Brethren, despise the work of Jesus, do not be like the Jews who criticise it, who attribute to one knows not what principle the efficacy of His goodness and His power. If you come across souls who fear the approach of temptation, do not say : Oh ! it's a matter of temperament ! everyone takes his pleasure where he finds it. No, Brethren, Jesus is

present in that soul that you admire, in that goodness which you find so great; whoever you may be who listen to me, you can be like that soul, great, elevated, good, and generous; like her, you can expiate and hope, and if you do not do so, it is because you do not want to, it is because you have not put your hand to the plough. The Saviour is there, grace is there which will act with you. The divine work, the work of goodness, of reparation, of grandeur, can be accomplished as soon as you are willing. Do not harden your hearts!

There is a sin of which Our Lord speaks in this Gospel, a sin which is the worst and the last of all, which seems to seal up the work of evil; it is the hardening of the heart,—the voluntary self-blinding of the sceptical soul who fears to be the dupe of good. Do not fear to be the dupe of good! Fear rather to be the dupe of evil which is more universal in appearance than in reality, fear to be the dupe of what freezes the heart, of what takes away hope, of what veils Heaven, and not of that which lifts up the heart and awakens the feeling of the divine.

That is the meaning of this Gospel put into a few words, into such simple phrases as are at my command, and I pray God to bless them that they may reach your hearts. May God take occasion of these words to speak to you Himself in the depth of your heart, for nothing goes straight home to souls except what God says to them. May God say to you Himself these

simple words, may He apply them to you in such a way as to turn you towards Him, may he draw a word from these souls dumb for so long that they may speak at last in a little prayer, in a little effort, in a simple aspiration ! . . .

XVII

"JESUS DISTRIBUTED THE LOAVES TO THOSE WHO WERE SEATED"

The Nourishment of Souls.

MY Brethren, how true it is that the scenes related in the Gospel are eternal! Take any one, the one given us in the Gospel to-day; this scene occurs in the desert. The soul knows well what the desert is. In the midst of the world, in the midst of crowds even, the soul often says: "There is no one here." The soul feels her own isolation in the midst of the agitation of multitudes. There is no soul, however she may live, who does not at certain moments feel herself to be in such a desert where she finds no one to speak to.

The multitude of which the Gospel speaks represents the multitude of souls: they fall wearied by the side of the road, and Jesus at a glance measures their weakness.

They are feeble creatures who on the journey of life get sick of things, sick of themselves, and give themselves up to discouragement. We all form part of this multitude. And then there is a divine gaze which

travels over this crowd, there is a Divine Being Who is always in the midst of it, Who constantly contemplates it with compassion and tenderness, Who seeks always to restore these poor souls. What shall we give them ? How shall we feed them ? For their need is great. For these souls have been made exacting, they have been made with a sublime hunger and thirst, with high aspirations. He alone knew what He should do, He alone could do what He wished. You see that all the scenes of the Gospel have an eternal actuality. In this desert a table is laid, or rather a meal is prepared, not to gratify sensuality but to support and strengthen those who are fainting by the way. There are always apostles who pass along the ranks of the seated multitude ready to receive their food ; and the least words of the Gospel are for ever realised in the Catholic Church. That is how these scenes are made eternal.

It is our history that we should read here ; there are many temptations in this world, many battles with pride and the flesh. *Au fond* there is only one temptation which is really terrible : the temptation of the soul who sees herself alone, who thinks she is no longer loved by God, who suffers as if God were not a witness of her sufferings, who fights alone as if God Who created her could lose interest in His own work, as if everything which occurs in her, her pains, her struggles, her sufferings, were not always followed by a look full of love and tenderness. There is only one temptation, the temptation of a soul who after her

faults does not place herself under the gaze of God and read there her pardon ; there is only one temptation, that of the soul who when measuring her fault by the goodness of God does not feel that that goodness infinitely surpasses her fault. What we must look at always if we are exhausted by suffering and fighting, if life is painful and our heart disturbed by a world of temptations, is that God has not ceased to take an interest in the smallest of His poor creatures, who suffers, fights, and groans ; the glance of Jesus is always there above the fainting crowd. Jesus had an inspiration, for He knew perfectly what He had to do ; when as God coming into this world He had said : *Ecce venio*, in reference to all the desires of His heart, His words were full of an infinite promise, and when God says such a word as that one looks at the hands of an omnipotent God which are full of benefits and graces. We know that those hands will not act according to the poor ideas of our hearts incapable of loving, but in accordance with the measure of an infinite goodness, the goodness of Him Who works miracles when and because He loves. From the hands of God we expect nothing but miracles of infinite goodness, and we are not astonished if the Saviour finds no other way of satisfying our infinite hunger and thirst than by the gift of Himself ; we are not surprised, I say, at this power in the service of His love, a power which assembles and unifies all our desires in a gift equal for each of us, identical to Him Who gives it, and at the same time Himself. One

thing always strikes me, my Brethren, namely that in the midst of so many odious blasphemies that we hear every day, the Eucharist, this immense and incomparable gift of God, is relatively, at least, and in spite of everything respected. This respect does not come from the faith of those who dare not approach or who think that there is something there, it is a faith which depends on the belief that God may love His creatures because they feel the need and the desire of such a love, and that if He should love, being omnipotent, His gift would run into the incomprehensible and in some sort the absurd. The gift is respected in this very incomprehensibility, even absurdity, because its extravagance is that of Love whose only motive is its self, which does not seek its reason for love in those whom it loves but finds it in its own infinite richness and infinite goodness of heart, which cannot be satisfied without a miracle of infinite goodness.

Man, in spite of everything, understands that; he needs to feel that God loves him; he respects the infinite gift of that love of God which has loved him up to the present, he shares the respect of the crowd which comes around this table in order to participate in the bread given to all those who are hungry. Man here pays homage to the principle of unity; he recognises the divine means which God has adopted to unite souls, to make circulate in them one single life; he hears the words: Love each other, forgive each other your offences, I will be the sign of this union, for I shall give Myself to each one of you in

order that there may be one and the same life in the depth of your souls. Man remains impressed by this magnificent idea which is so beautiful that it cannot but be true. That is why man has recognised the idea of the unity of souls in the Eucharistic life of Jesus, which is complete and the same in each of us.

Yes, it is indeed something great and beautiful, even when one does not believe in it. One cannot help marvelling at something divine, at a conception which surpasses all our ideas and carries away our admiration. My Brethren, the Divine Master looks at you tenderly, you whom He loves just as you are, not because you are anything but because He is good ; this is why He calls you ; what He wishes to give you is the bread which will fortify you, the means of continuing your journey. This bread is not the recompense of those who are good and strong, it is the bread of the weak, it is the strength with which they will be able to struggle and live. Let us admit the fact that the majority of those who do not approach the Holy Table are stopped by this thought : " I am not good enough, I have not made sufficient effort, I have not made a sufficient clearance in myself of egotism and sensual passions." They think they are speaking rightly, and they are speaking badly. They are speaking badly because Jesus said : " Do not wait till you are strong to seek Him Who will make you strong, do not wait until you have conquered to receive Him Who comes to you in order to make you conquerors,"

And then, this bread is strength ; which is as much as to say that it is not always sweetness or a satisfaction to the receiver or the blossoming of love rejoicing the soul. No, very often it is not that, but it is just strength, that is to say something which sustains and helps you ; approach then, not because you are good but in order to become good ; not because you are strong but to arm yourselves with courage ; not for the enjoyment of a sweet emotion but in order to be fortified, because the Divine Master wishes to approach you, because it is under His eyes that you live and fight and fall.

How great man becomes by the thought that God follows each soul in turn, that He calls her and wishes to give Himself to her, that He has made her capable of His comprehension and love ! That, my Brethren, is the salutary warning that I wish to give you to-day ; see the look of Jesus following each of His children ; see the goodness He displays, see the table He prepares and the souls who are called to it, see the Apostles chosen to break the divine bread which is not reserved for those who are pure and strong but which itself produces strength and purity.

The Divine Master is present. You are weak and full of misery, stooping under the weight of your faults ; look towards Him Who can give you everything, Whose mercy and goodness are inexhaustible, look at Him and come : *Gustate et videte ;* come and see how sweet the Lord is.

XVIII

"IF I SPEAK THE TRUTH TO YOU, WHY DO YOU NOT BELIEVE ME? YOU SAY I HAVE NO FAITH. IS THIS TRUE?"

TO-DAY'S Gospel is simply a dialogue, an animated, urgent dialogue between Our Lord Jesus Christ and the Jews who denied Him. The Divine Master is about to leave this world; He is just about to return to His Father and His words take on a greater tone of urgency than they ever possessed before. Knowing what a boon and what a necessity faith is for the human soul, He urges His deniers to believe in truth and to believe His words, conjuring them in the name of all His mysteries, of all His life, of all His teachings which are before their very eyes.

Well, my Brethren, Our Lord asks us also the question which He puts to the Jews: Who among you shall convince Me of sin?

We have followed the Divine Master from His birth to His death. We have seen Him born in the stable at Bethlehem, and we have seen the example which He gave us; we have halted at Nazareth and have said;

There is the beauty of life, there is its grandeur! If a God were to come into this world, it is there indeed that He would be found, living this life of toil and self-denial, this commonplace life which would seem a burden to the man too weak to bear it. We have followed Him on the road of Calvary—this is the road which a God wishing to become man would tread, for the road of sorrow is life indeed. I would not wish for a God who had not suffered and to whom I could say: You do not know the truth of life; you do not know the temptation which sorrow brings; you do not know the terrible blasphemies which are born in the depths of the soul when it is faced by certain griefs or betrayals or sacrifices.

But Jesus lived this life of sorrow. Because the life of the majority of men is sad, and because it is a life of toil, He wished to live an obscure life of toil; because it is a life of sorrow, He wished to be surrounded by sorrows.—Which of you shall convince Me of sin?—Not us, Lord, for indeed whoever Thou art we have never seen anything so admirable as He Who passed over the face of the earth doing good, working, blessing, showering benefits on those who misunderstood Him, suffering and dying as no man ever died. Whoever Thou art, Lord, there is no one who could convince Thee of sin; we must come closer to Thee to know who Thou art and what is the meaning of Thy life. We must follow Thy invitation: "Come and see." The more we see, the more we wish to become like Thee and the more we realise

that the beauty of life is where Thou hast placed it; it is where Thou art.

And My teachings? Who shall convince Me of sin? There is beauty, Lord, in Thy teachings; beauty the like of which I never learnt from Greece; never have I found a philosophy which could console as Thine does; never have I heard words which so went to the heart, nor moral teaching which could so order society as the teaching which Thou gavest on the Mount; never have I heard such words as those of the Beatitudes. Thy voice goes to the heart of man; it reaches down to the depths of that abyss, and we say with St Peter: "To whom then shall we go?" It was Thou, Lord, Who spoke the only words which penetrate the soul and give it life in the full dignity of humanity. Thy words are marked with the stamp which truth alone carries. None could convince Thee of sin in Thy life, nor of error in Thy words.

Then Jesus adds: "If I speak the truth to you...." This indeed is truth which we see in the life at Nazareth, in this life of self-giving and of sacrifice. Truth is indeed in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. It is not necessary to be a Christian, it is sufficient to be a man in order to wish to live a life worthy of a man; it is the secret harmony which by linking the human soul and the teachings of the Divine Master proclaims its truth. There is no soul which goes to God or wishes to go to Him which does not feel that in the word of Jesus is truth. Even you who do not practise your faith, even you must bow your heads and say:

Here is beauty; we live differently, but this is how we should live; we love differently, but this is how we should love; we act differently, but this is how we should act. He Who made the heart of man for truth established a sympathy between the two and marked truth with such a sign that we cannot mistake it.

If I speak the truth to you, if I display it in My life which you admire, and in My teaching which you cannot but recognise as true, why do you not believe? That is the awful question which Jesus asks. You know that truth is there, you feel it; you admire Christ and His moral teaching; when you read the Gospels—that incomparable book which is more than a book, which is life itself—your admiration is unbounded. If I speak the truth to you, and if you recognise it in My words, if they are marked with the sign which you cannot fail to recognise, why, says Jesus, do you not believe in Me? My Brethren, that is an awful question.

There is a reason for our stopping short at admiration and doing nothing, knowing the truth but not bringing it into our lives, respecting things for their nobility, admiring them and seeing that they are worthy of the soul, but failing to give them reality. What is this reason, and where is it? That is a question which each one of you must answer for yourself. I am nothing, I am but a voice, the voice of Him Who alone cries out and whom you all hear in the bottom of your hearts; but I would wish to make this question enter into the hearts of each one of you.

There I would leave it, living, to torment you with restlessness, a question the answer to which you cannot for ever shirk.

Why do you not believe in Jesus? You say: "Because I have no faith." Is that true? Is it true that nothing is at work in your heart, nothing like faith—dim, maybe, enfeebled, dying, dumb, perhaps, for you have so stifled and tormented it—is there not something there? It is Faith. Have you not sufficient to come to Christ as the man came who cried to Him: "Help my lack of faith! I believe indeed, that is I would like to believe, I wish to believe, I see the motives for belief, but my faith is weak, it is as an unsettled day." You who can speak as this man spoke have still enough faith to come to Christ.

"But I have no love. Did I but love God, if I felt my heart open with joy, if I could love as good what I see to be true! If only truth would enter my heart, if only I could feel myself drawn towards it!"

Do not wait, my Brethren, for that. That is not necessary. Take but one step towards truth, make but one sacrifice. Cleanse the eye of your soul and you will see more clearly; free your enslaved will, and it will be stronger. You have sufficient faith and love. Your love is so weak that it has no resemblance to the yearning of a heart that overflows, but the very effort which you make and the generosity with which you make it show none the less your will and your love. He who loves Me, says Our Lord, is not he who cries "Lord, Lord," but he who keeps My commandments.

" Ah, once it was possible, but so many things have happened since . . . it is too late now. A whole lifetime has passed over me ; life has withered my soul, it has withered even its power of loving. I could bring God nothing but unhappy relics, the unhappy relics of a soul which has squandered all its good. Before it would have been well, now it is too late."

Do not stop, my Brethren, at this thought. If this is your answer to the question, your answer is worthless. God will be able to give back to you all that you lost, God's riches are enough to clothe you again. When the prodigal son returned, his father placed upon him a splendid garment, richer than those he wore before he left his father's house.

" But I fear restraint. I picture to myself this life which you bid me enter as a perpetual restraint, as the state of a soul which never goes where it wishes to, but is always fettered, always captive. . . ."

But suppose that your soul came to love her captivity, to prefer this generous sacrifice to the intolerable weight of discomfort under which she used to groan, would not then the law of love be a deliverance rather than an enslavement of the soul ?

Why, my Brethren ? Answer yourselves. Perhaps there is such a thing, such an obstacle, quite definite, in your lives, on which I would not touch. But it is known to you, and you will answer, with an effort perhaps, but with resolute generosity. So may your answer be to-day : " As truly as I believe in Thee, as

truly as I believe the beauty of Thy teaching, so do I bring Thee the good will of my heart."

That is the thought with which I would leave each one of you before the face of the Divine Master Who asks you the question. There is no severity in His look. He is austere, if you like, but it is a necessary austerity, for there are some lives which must call forth that austere look of God. But His glance is kind and tender, and full of power; it rests upon you, it sounds the depths of your heart, and says: "You who believe in My truth, you who believe in My teaching, why do you not come to Me?" Leave vain questioning, but answer by a generous sacrifice, by destroying the obstacle which hinders your coming.

I have done, my Brethren, but listen to the appeal of Jesus. Whatever your life may be, to-morrow, if you wish, you may come to Him, with the tears of a repentant heart; you may come to-morrow with the generosity of a soul which exerts itself to a saving resolution, and come not merely to His feet to weep, but also to His sacred feast, to His Heart, that you may know how much He loves you.

You can do it; why do you not believe Him? I leave you just this one small word—why? To-morrow it will serve to examine your conscience; you will start from it on a task which will be your salvation; and I have no doubt (and so I pray with all my heart) that it will be the beginning of a firm and generous resolution which will bring you all together

no longer to the one-o'clock mass, but to a more intimate and earlier one, where you will find yourselves grouped in Jesus, Who gives Himself in His entirety to each and to all, Jesus, Who is the life of our soul in time and in eternity.

XIX

"I WILL DRAW ALL MEN TO ME"

OUR Lord is entering Jerusalem in the midst of the acclamations of the mob. It was the hour, you know, which had been prayed for so long. The disciples were rejoicing, everybody was hastening in His steps . . . and Jesus thinks of that other time which He fears and for which at the same time He prays, the time of suffering, of the Cross. Then indeed He will draw all to Him.

Inasmuch as we exist, we all of us need the Cross because we have sinned and because we must die. We are at the foot of the Cross that virtue may proceed from it and draw us to the Divine Master. You will not expect me in this place to say that sin is a small matter. Its shadow looms over the whole of the Passion, it looms over the Divine Master in the Garden of Gethsemani. It is sin that fills with mud the cup from which He turns in horror. In the desperate cry which you will hear in a moment: "My Father, why have You forsaken Me?" it is sin that has separated Him from His Father, and when He stretches His arms on the Cross it is to hide us in His wounds.

Sin slumbers and is torpid . . . we have strangely forgotten it and seem to speak of it with disgust . . . then we awake from this torpor and it seems so grievous and desperate ! it is too late, eternity is fixed for ever ! We must be forgiven, we need the bounty of mercy which stretches out with the arms of Christ ; for there we may find the immeasurable mercy of God Who has atoned for all sin.

Come, and let us shed a tear which we may mingle with His blood. Shed a tear ! There is contrition. Let us go further, my Brethren, and let us ask for forgiveness ; but when you think that you can no longer obtain it, then for the moment lose yourself in your regret for sin, think of it that you may weep for it, set your regret between the sin and your wrong-doing.

And death ? what of death ? I am not here to tell you that death is a final function which must be fulfilled with decency. For me death is terrifying. If there are no grievous faults in my life, it makes me tremble by reason of the unknown, and of the long years which I have lived, by I know not what in me which I feel to be contrary to God. . . . There is then but one ray of light, this mercy which is always extended, this life which is always offered, this blood which is always shed.

Death is a precipice ! No—the arms of Christ are always stretched out to receive us : *In manus Tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum :* Into Thy hands, O Lord, I commend my soul, my poor lost soul,

hidden in Thine, my soul which must hide and lose itself in Thy mercy, Thy mercy which forgets and forgives. My soul trusts to the love Thou showest, and for her there is now nothing but Thy love! Death is no abyss, unless its depths are those of mercy. It is Christ Who draws Himself to us at the foot of the Cross, to transform our sins. Let us mingle the bitter draught of our sorrows with this sorrow. May it make us better and give us back to our fellows with a little more goodness, a little more understanding of their sufferings, to soften them by covering over all suffering with itself! We have need for belief in love, and we have difficulty in thinking that anyone could love such a being as ourself. No matter, this love is asserted in spite of all the ingratitude, the ignominy, the degradation of our faults. It is this humanity which God, in His goodness, deigns to love, of which He has made His pearl of great price, which He has redeemed at such a price.

The Cross reaches out to make us believe in this love which searches for us even to the end. Let us approach it as sinners that we may find hope, as poor mortals who will soon come to the eternal to which, as they say, they are condemned, but as I would say, are called.

"I will draw all to Me."

XX

" YET A LITTLE TIME AND YE WILL NO LONGER SEE ME "

MY Brethren,

We have just read the discourse between Our Lord and His disciples, in which He poured forth His heart into the heart of His Apostles, whom now He calls His friends. " Yet a little time "—a few hours—" and you shall see Me no more "—and again a few hours—" and you shall see Me. . . ." Life may seem interminable, but when we consider the passage of the centuries and look at eternity, then life may indeed be called " a little time."

" I go away, and you shall see Me no more, for I go back to My Father—and this is why I go back to My Father : to make ready a place for you. So shall you see Me again ! " He was going to His Father, not to leave them alone but to prepare a place for them. He wished them to be with Him where He was going. " My Father, where I shall be let them be also—that is why you shall see Me again—I am going back to My Father ! "

The disciples did not understand Him. Have you noticed in the Gospels how every time that Our Lord speaks of leaving them they fail to understand ? They

cannot understand this language at all. In their minds is another idea that Our Lord can neither suffer nor die. St Peter does not agree. " What, You suffer ? Never !—Perhaps now, Lord, the time has come when You will re-establish the kingdom of Israel ! "

Christ's language was simple. He was going to leave them, but they could not accommodate themselves to this idea, it made no entry into their minds.

Modicum—the word is a little melancholy, a little sad ; *Modicum*—such is the axe laid at the root of all the joys of this world ! everything ends. Everything is finished ! . . . then a little time again, and what remains of our life ? It is sad, and yet life holds more sorrows than joys in waiting . . . again a little time and this sorrow will be over, and no more will we be troubled by the temptation which is now so heavy ; again a little time and we shall see again those from whose absence we are so desolate. . . . *Modicum*—the word marks the end of worldly joys, but it gives fresh life, too, to eternal hopes.

Our Lord speaks of the impressions they may feel after their Master has left them and when they hear so soon the cry : " Let Him come down from the Cross ! . . . See, He cannot save Himself ! . . . Show your power ! " The world will triumph at the foot of the Cross while the disciples seem to be beaten. The Apostles must have found this hour very long. They had tasted so many sorrows since the beginning of the strange triumph which the world opposed to Jesus. This is so well expressed in the 72nd Psalm : I have

seen the wicked prosper, and you left them in peace, and I have laboured in vain . . . in the midst of my troubles I asked myself whether I was not wandering in sorrow instead of plucking these flowers . . . so the Psalmist wrote with admirable beauty. How well he expressed the feelings of the Apostles. They had seen the world triumph and Christ humbled and misunderstood . . . where was Christ? where was their God? Our Lord felt what would be in their hearts, their hesitation, and the scandal that might arise. "You shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall turn to joy."

To-day, again, Our Lord's disciples can see the joy of those whose happiness is in this world. They enjoy, you will say, in happiness and without remorse, certain things which I would not dare to touch. While I am at the mercy of so unstable a faith, they are in tranquil incredulity, they feel themselves settled . . . happy—and yet these joys and senseless ambitions are followed by such strange mortification! They seem to be girded with egoism, while so many things can cause me suffering, while I have love for living creatures, and by loving them increase the number of points in which I may be wounded by grief:—yet when suffering reaches them, their rage is senseless!

From the sorrows which spring from so many vanities, and loves that have met with deception, from these is made the life of poetry. In the world, if you give yourself the trouble to follow the morrows of feastings, you will find the betrayed loves which rack

the human soul. This is despair, grief, the beginning of hell for those who have abused all their pleasures, and it is from their joys you may see the rise of their intolerable sorrows. When I consider the joys of this world, I wonder what place can be found in the souls of those who seek them for the joys of Heaven.

With the Apostles, the Christian souls who have made great sacrifices, it is the very contrary. The suffering of having been deprived of what they lacked or sought for in vain, will be repaid to them one day in great abundance. Sacrifice leaves them ready—human disappointments prepare a channel for those joys which are rightly so called—indeed the position will one day have to be reversed—and thus you see how joy comes by hope through sorrows in this world. . . . Could I but bring one tear to those dry eyes which cannot weep for another, what a joy would I prepare for them!

Consider, too, the fertility of sorrow; this unhappiness will not be lost. You know Our Lord's comparison; why, then, do you shrink from the comparison which we find at the end of this Gospel? Indeed this young mother has suffered, and suffered cruelly. This child is her own child, and his life with her has not been a sojourn with a stranger . . . she will see him, she will embrace him, she will love him, and God, too, will love him and will receive him in His bosom. Herein lies her joy, that she feels that something which is really hers can also add to the riches of God. God, it is true, gave him to her, but still he is

indeed her own, and this is a joy which shall not be taken from her. To have a child given to God, a saint who will praise Him through all eternity—therein lies the beauty and the fruitfulness of suffering; this was the comparison which struck the minds of the Apostles when, in such sorrow, they first gave new life to souls, and which St Paul expressed by saying: "We groan within ourselves in the trial of the adoption of the children of God."

Things that give us joy would not be so precious to us had they not been so dearly bought; they are the fruit of our tears and of our sacrifices; for there is a strict relation between things. When we suffer and feel that our suffering is for something else, how our suffering is as nothing to us, and how quickly we forget it!

Happiness comes from a joy which never grows old and which we never exhaust; it is as a spring whence we may drink without ever drinking it dry; so this joy which we have dearly bought with the price of suffering, will endure for ever.

Modicum—a sad thought, there are but a few days left and these seem so very short . . . the veil grows daily thinner and thinner, but when it fades altogether we are left in the hands of God. He will give us a joy which will never be taken from us.

XXI

"MARY!"

THERE are many lessons we may learn from the Gospel which we have read this morning. The attitude of Mary Magdalen at the tomb is a good representation of the soul which searches for Our Lord, seeking Him in the midst of darkness and aridity; there is just one small light sufficient for her to see her road and her whereabouts. Nevertheless she advances continually until she achieves her end.

Who will remove this stone for her, this mass which weighs so heavily on her heart, stifling her, preventing her from breathing, preventing her from finding Him for Whom she searches and without Whom she cannot live?

She can find only the place in which He had been laid; but He is no longer there . . . it is empty . . . but still she searches without ceasing, remembering the days when she saw Him and tasted the joys of His presence. . . . This remembrance is her support, and by this she lives; and still she searches, and still she waits. All these days, weeks, months, years of waiting and silence will have been forgotten at one word of Our Lord's.

Mary Magdalen can teach us another lesson concerning works of charity. Let me express Our Lord's saying in a new form. Instead of "The poor you have always with you, but Me you have not always," let me say "Me you will not always have, but the poor you will always have with you and you should do to them what you would wish to do to Me." According to the interpretation of the Fathers of the Church, and in particular of St Augustine, the poor are the feet of Jesus Christ; it is on the poor, then, that we should pour the perfume of our charity, as though on the feet of Jesus; nor should we be content with pouring it generously and scattering it with profusion, but we should break the vase, that is, open our hearts and give of ourselves. For what purpose this waste? A waste indeed it is, but for those who love Our Lord the prodigal gift of sacrifice is also a necessity.

Besides, what good can come from a closed heart? A perfume which is sealed up becomes rancid and is no more a perfume; if it is to give out a good scent it must be opened and poured out. That is how we may know Our Lord, and by that mark too we shall be known as His. The disciples who met Him on the road to Emmaus walked with Him without knowing Him for Jesus. But they recognised Him by the charity which made Him break bread and share it with them.

Finally Our Lord consoles us in to-day's Gospel by the thought of Heaven. In Heaven Jesus will speak to the soul for ever, ever calling her "Mary . . .

Mary ! " and the soul will ever reply " Rabboni . . . Master ! " . . . Heaven is an eternal colloquy between God and the soul, in which the soul will never tire of hearing Him ; nor will she ever tire of answering Him.

XXII

"PEACE BE WITH YOU!"

What is Peace?

IT will be enough for me, my Brethren, to read this Gospel with you. It is the evening of the day of the Resurrection, the disciples are very sad, and the infant Church is overwhelmed with fear and terror; Christ comes among His children and says to them "Peace be with you." He shows them His pierced hands and feet and the wound in His side, and gives them the gift of peace. The fruits of the Resurrection are peace and joy, and the terms and conditions of this peace are the wounds in His hands and in His side. Our Lord seems to say to them "The peace which I bring to you flows from these wounds." On this account it is the more precious to our hearts and calls forth in them the more gratitude. In the wounds which He shows us are our joy and our consolation, our forgiveness, and that which allows us to hope and to raise our eyes aloft; in His wounds, too, we find the greatest testimony of His love, for His love was greatest where His suffering was greatest.

Christ appears to the terrified men in the little upper room and says to them: "As My Father sent Me so do I send you"; in this is summed up the whole history of the Church, the whole history of the Apostles throughout the ages. As the Father sent Jesus for love of the world and that the world might be saved by Him, so, for love of the world and that the world might be saved by them, Jesus sent the Apostles. As the Father sent Jesus, not that He might have joy, but that He might suffer and save souls, so also it was to suffer and to save souls that Jesus sent the Apostles. And as the Father sent Jesus that He might finally triumph by the trial of suffering, so Jesus, too, sends the Apostles that they may triumph by the trial of suffering. In this appearance of Christ, then, we see the Church's destiny; for so must the Church suffer that she may be glorified. It was only by His Passion that Christ won His triumph. The vision of the Apostles should enlighten our hearts when we are tempted to lack of faith or confidence.

It is the evening of Easter Sunday and Our Lord breathes on the Apostles and gives them the Holy Ghost to spread through them over all the faithful. "Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins you shall forgive they are forgiven, whose sins you shall retain, they are retained." Our greatest happiness and the motive of our greatest gratitude is that there is among men the power of forgiving sins.

To what day would you have assigned the institution of the Sacrament of Penance? As we read the Gospel

it is difficult to choose from so many occasions. I could have assigned it to one of the most touching and divine scenes in the Holy Gospel, the day when Jesus, stooping to the ground, raised the guilty woman and told her to go in peace and to fall into sin no more. I could have assigned it again to the day of Calvary when an unfortunate sinner, suffering by the side of Jesus, compared his suffering, which was merited, to that of Jesus, which was not, confessed Him as God and invoked Him, receiving in return from Jesus the promise of Paradise. But no! The Sacrament of Penance was instituted for our instruction on the very day of Easter. There is the tomb in which sin is buried, never to be born again, from which we rise regenerated and clothed again with a living garment, the tomb from which a living being has risen for us. Forgiveness is poured upon our souls from His pierced hands and from His pierced heart, from which flowed blood and water. Life springs for us from His wounds; while Our Lord showed His Apostles His side, and His hands with the marks of the nails, that they might grieve, at the same time He showed Himself living to them that they might have joy. This is the feeling which the Sacrament of Penance should awaken in us, a feeling at once of sorrow and of joy.

Our Lord appeared again, my Brethren, to His Apostles on the octave of Easter Sunday, for the sake of one of His Apostles, and He made him look at His wounds and place his hand in His pierced side. In this world what must I touch? What assurance, what

feeling is necessary? Where must I place my finger? Surely, on the goodness of God. If I can set myself at rest in my heart that Our Lord is good, that He has loved me, that He loves me at this very moment, then, in spite of all my ingratitude, my weakness, and my wretchedness, will not the greatest need of my soul have been satisfied? It is to Jesus crucified that my looks must be turned, to Him I must direct my faith and all the love of my heart. "Thou art my Lord and my God!" Only my God could have such goodness!

This Gospel tells us also that this life is mingled of joy and sorrow; the Apostles were in an excess of sorrow; Jesus comes to them, and the sight of Him brings them joy; soon Jesus will leave them: is not this our condition? There are days in our interior life when we are obliged to go to God by the fidelity of a will which is humiliatingly impoverished. There are thoughts which cast the soul into sorrow, and sorrow also comes to the soul from the general view of things; so the soul goes through many long days—yet in this sorrow we must sustain ourselves by the consolations we remember.

A consolation is given to us not that we may rejoice, but that we may be sustained. Of what moment is it that we should have joy? What does matter is that we should be generous towards God, that we should advance. In every grace there is something lethal, something which gives us the power of immolation. We are given our consolation by a Christ Whose hands and side are pierced; our consolation is the fruit of

His toil, the result of His sufferings, it comes to us from His bleeding wounds; can we, then, wish for a consolation which shall not have cost us any struggle nor any suffering? Consolation is the food which sustains us as we travel along the road; it is the bread which was given to Elias that he might have strength to climb the mountain; that is the Peace of Christ. If our soul is imprisoned in sorrow, darkness, and fear, as were the Apostles on Easter Sunday, then we may be sure that consolation is close at hand. For consolation is intermittent, but at last it comes. When the soul least expects it she is aware of it; suddenly something comes to give her fresh vigour, to sustain her, to raise her up again.

This is the reason why we meet with joy on our road; this is the sole reason for joy; a joy that will disappear, to return at intervals to sustain us, to give us fresh comfort, and to assure us of what we have such need to be certain of, that we are on the right road. This is the spirit in which we should take our joy and our consolation: every soul should live and die as Jesus lived and as Jesus died; every soul should rise again from the dead, as Jesus rose from the dead. That is the story of our life. If to-day we recall the Passion, soon we shall be able to record the triumph.

XXIII

"IT IS GOOD FOR YOU THAT I SHOULD LEAVE YOU"

I THINK, my Brethren, that you must have had the same feelings as I have had in reading this Gospel. The language is somewhat obscure, and we may be tempted, as the Apostles in their time were tempted, to ask Our Lord to explain it. We can nevertheless throw a certain light on it ourselves.

These words are taken from the discourse which Our Lord delivered to the Apostles at the Last Supper. St John has left us an account of this discourse, in which Jesus seems to speak to each one of our souls as though it were alone with Him. The Divine Master spoke of the world and of the persecutions which the world had made Him suffer, and of those, too, which it was to inflict upon His followers—the disciple not being greater than the Master. As they treated the Master, so will they treat the disciples. They will persecute you and think that they do worthily to do so; when they try to destroy you they will think that they are doing homage to God.

These are the words which the disciples heard and which were filling them with sadness. Indeed Our Lord could hardly use such language except at the

actual moment of this first Communion, after that great proof of love, while His strength was actually in them as He said : " Do this in commemoration of Me ; you will always have Me in the midst of you in the form of the Eucharist. You will always have My virtue, My support, My love."

Such words could be used only at the moment when He was manifesting this great love, so great that it was prepared to go right to the very end. " Now I go back to My Father, and I see that your hearts are filled with sadness because I speak thus to you."

This is to be more or less the permanent condition of the Church. Jesus will depart from it and will leave it sad when He goes back to Him who sent Him. Happy then is the soul of which it can be said that it has been sent by God, which has spent its time in doing good and in making known to others the goodness of God, His ineffable mercy and His purity. Happy the soul which comes from God, and goes back to God.

But the disciples can see only the sorrow which is entailed by this departure. The Church is indeed now alone, as a widow who has lost her husband, or as an orphan child, motherless and fatherless, a prey in her weakness to every ambition and every covetousness.

Such is the destiny of the Church as Jesus painted it when He showed it to the Apostles.

She is to remain alone. He was her spouse, her father, it was on His lips that she hung and on His arm that she rested ; but now He is to fail her. The

Apostles are filled with heartrending sorrow, with that sorrow which is so deep that sometimes it makes speech impossible, so violently do we feel it in the very inmost parts of our soul.

Nevertheless, continues the Master, I tell you the truth: "It is needful that I go away." What a paradox this seems, my Brethren. Needful that Jesus should leave the Apostles! He, by Whose words they lived, Whose presence gave courage to their hearts, confidence in Whom saved them from vacillation and doubt? To what end should He depart, Who has the words of eternal life? Nevertheless, my Brethren, it is needful, both for the soul and for the Church.

Tell me, from when do you date the grounding of your soul in goodness, the development of a certain virtue, the first revelation of the necessity of humility, patience, even of faith? Surely you date it most often from the moment of trial when Jesus seemed to have left you, when you learnt, thinking that you were alone, to know yourself and to be mistrustful of yourself. Then you knew the price of humility, of patience, which the human heart, so poor and yet so exigent, learns with such difficulty.

The Church too, my Brethren, dates her own growth from her hours of trial. There have been certain moments or periods when Jesus seems more particularly to have left her, moments when night has fallen and the Church has cried out "*Mane nobiscum*"—do not leave us. The Church has known these hours of anguish, of darkness, and isolation. But she has

recovered herself, her bosom has been enlarged, and she has emerged with fresh vigour and youth. As she withdrew within herself she understood by the light of the Holy Ghost Who is her Soul, her Guest, the necessity of making herself more humble, more saintly, more abandoned at the feet of Jesus.

It is good for us, then, my Brethren, that Jesus should leave us, so that the soul may not be too dependent on any extraordinary grace to sustain her. It is good for the Church which should count on the eternal youth which the Holy Ghost maintains in her, on the deposit of faith which she preserves for the world and the deposit of sanctity which she spreads over souls.

" For if I do not go away, the Consoler will not come to you "—by a divine dispensation the Holy Ghost could be sent only after Our Lord's Ascension ; and by the Holy Ghost is meant the finger of God, Who inscribes in the depths of the heart what Jesus whispers in the ear, Who engraves the truth which proceeds from the mouth of the Divine Master deep in the soul, and keeps it there alive and undying. This is the Consoler and the Holy Ghost Who was promised to us.

The first work of the Holy Ghost was to unite the divine and the human nature in Jesus in a strict and indissoluble union ; when the man spoke it was God Who spoke ; when Jesus suffered in His sacred humanity, it was God Who suffered.

But the Holy Ghost has another task, which is

consequent on the first—and this is a matter of simple theology, catechism theology, but none the less profoundly true—He unites all souls to Jesus, even as He united the human and divine nature in Jesus. He unites the human soul to Jesus in such a way that we are living members of the humanity of Jesus, and receive the influence of the divinity of Jesus, even as His humanity received the influence of the divine nature of the Word.

He is the Consoler because He unites the Church to God, each soul to God, and gives rise in the soul to a stream which was not in her own nature but comes from God. This principle of consolation, which rises with the strength of a fountain in the most violent sorrows, is a principle of hope which survives the most cruel deceptions, a principle of love which overcomes every ingratitude and sadness. The Holy Ghost is the Consoler because He is the principle of unity which makes us all one inasmuch as we are, as the Apostle says, the members of Christ.

That is the part of the Holy Ghost,—to unite the Church to Jesus in such a way that she is the body of which He is the head ; it is thus that He unites souls to Jesus. And for this He is called the Fortifier, the Consoler, above all, the Paraclete.

When the Holy Ghost has come into the Church, receiving the mission which gives Him to her as her permanent soul and as the principle of her life and of her unity, then He will convince the world of sin by means of the Church which He uses as a tool. That

is to say He will convince the spirit which is hostile to Christ, egoism as opposed to devotion to others, the earth as opposed to Heaven, the denial of Heaven and the divorce of man from God. By the world we mean, too, those who misunderstand the aspirations of the soul or those who accept them only to bury them in the mud of sin.

In the midst of us there is a Church. She is a transcendent fact before whom none can pass without saying "What is she? What is this permanence of the Church which stands in the midst of the decay which overtakes all the works of this world? What is this unique Church, this Holy Church, which never alters, but preserves truth without letting it be in the least enfeebled, which is hated by the world because the world cannot pass by her without feeling a reproach that touches it intimately?" This Church is the witness by which the Holy Ghost convinces the world of sin, by which He forces it to raise its eyes and see God present and active, to be better than it wishes to be.

He will convince the world of justice, too. There are souls in the Church, in whom the Holy Ghost lives, whose condition is not different from that of those who are of the world. They, too, find virtue difficult; they have the same temptations, the same instincts, the same difficulties of temperament; they, too, have to fight a prodigious battle with themselves; they have to undergo painful trials and see themselves faced with that awful objection, the only real one—

the presence of suffering in spite of a God Who is infinitely good. They, too, find life long and sorrowful, they have all the sufferings which those souls have who are embittered and blaspheme because of their suffering. These souls are a testimony to justice to those souls of this world who deny it. Their progress through life is a continual proof of good. They prove God by the faith which sustains and animates them, by invincible hope, by their generous fight even to martyrdom, by their indefatigable march towards eternity, in which they never cease to fix their eyes on Heaven.

Thus does the Holy Ghost live in the Church and in our souls when Jesus has departed and we can see Him no more. The Holy Ghost is His witness. He makes justice shine before the eyes of the world which hates it, and will convince the world of judgement, for the prince of this world is already overcome.

Jesus dies on the Cross, and those who crucified Him will be dispersed, carrying through the whole universe the mark of the judgement which was passed in the name of faith on those who did not receive Him. Already the prince of this world has been judged. On the morrow of the death of Christ the devil and his idols will crash to ruin. The enemy must take a different form; every moment he must renew his arguments, for he has been convinced of impotence. Indeed the world bears the mark of the judgement passed on it, so that even it proclaims in its way the triumph of the Cross.

So the Holy Ghost strips the mask from evil and reveals good. He disengages the eternal from the corruptible, the holy from the damned.

"I have many things still to say to you, but you cannot bear them now."

Our Lord did not teach the Apostles everything which might have been useful to them, but only what they could receive. In the same way, my Brethren, the Holy Ghost teaches us little by little, drop by drop. The poor human heart is a vessel with so narrow a neck that in order to receive truth a careful hand, the maternal hand of God is necessary to pour truth into it. How slowly we learn! and how necessary it is for us to hear things again and again before we have properly learnt them! A phrase may have some meaning for us only at a given moment; another day we read it and see that we understood nothing of it. We think that now we understand, and we seem to have all its meaning given to us; but after a little time we will find a truer and deeper meaning, and look back on ourselves as on children, who then knew nothing. So it will always be, for the Holy Ghost is continually disclosing fresh aspects of truth.

It is the same with the Church as with the soul. The Holy Ghost gives her fresh revelation from time to time, not only by the addition of new dogmas, but by a more profound belief in dogmas that have already been revealed, by a more penetrating answer and one more appropriate to various new objections, by a truer light which illumines the different aspects and enables

the Church to conduct herself consistently in a changing world which continually renews its opposition while she preserves her identity.

Finally Jesus sums up the function of the Holy Ghost in souls and in the Church. "It is He Who will glorify Me." He will show Jesus as the Master of peoples and of individuals, as the truth which continually reveals itself more fully and which even error can only draw out into greater splendour. He will show Him as our Saviour and our hope, as Him for Whom we are made, and by Whom alone we can be saved. The Holy Ghost is sent in order that it may be Christ Who thinks in each soul, that it may be He Who teaches, Who feels, Who loves; Christ, the only good and the only pattern of patience.

Such, my Brethren, is the part played by the Holy Ghost in the Church, such is the end of His mission.

Part II

SERMONS ON THE EUCHARIST AND THE PASSION

I

" I SHALL NOT LEAVE YOU ORPHANS, I SHALL COME BACK TO YOU "

ST JOHN, who wrote after the other Evangelists, wished to sum up in one word the institution of the Holy Eucharist. With a perspicacity which embraced the whole subject in one glance, with that style so condensed because so penetrating, his definition included everything in one phrase: Our Lord loved His children to the very end. The Apostle defined and summed up everything in this one phrase. He tells us why Our Lord gave Himself, he gives us the motive which urged Him to this sacrifice; finally he explains why there was such a multiplication of miracles in the institution of this sacrament.

Everything is summed up in the one phrase: " Jesus loved His own." He loved them to the very end of His life, to the end of all time, to the limit of His power, to the limit of His own being.

Consider, my Brethren, the immensity of this gift. We have been given everything which an overwhelming and all-powerful love could give us.

There was a moment during the Last Supper when

Our Lord took bread in His hands to distribute it to His Apostles. This was a moment of inexpressible joy for the heart of the Saviour, because an inanimate thing had come to life at His creative word. His whole being was contained in the bread which He held. As Our Saviour gave Himself, His heart experienced an immense revival, an overflowing of joy, because He was giving them " The gift of God," of which He had spoken to the Samaritan woman, that is to say, Himself.

We know, then, what there is in the Holy Eucharist ; Our Lord Himself, God in His entirety. That is why the Eucharist is the greatest gift with which this all-powerful love could present us. It is, too, the permanent gift, " In finem " ; Our Lord did not so love us as one day to love us no more ; He did not so love us as not to be continually with us. If I say " I have loved," there is something inexpressibly sad in the phrase ; my love is something forgotten, something dead, for now I love no more ; if I say " I shall love," it is an empty expression, for the heart is not giving itself. Love is a verb which should have only one tense, the present. Jesus has always loved us, He loves us during every single moment ; and His love is incarnate in the most living of all realities, the Holy Eucharist, where love makes the complete gift of self. It is not that Jesus *has* loved us, and one day will love us no more ; His love is eternal. The thought of this living love is the true commentary on the word " Dilexit."

Under three aspects, O Jesus, Thy Holy Church shows me the mystery of the Holy Eucharist.

First, the permanent presence of Him Who is in Heaven, but Who wished to remain on earth in the lowly station to which His love consigned Him—that is, as the Fathers explain, as a perpetual pilgrim.

Secondly, Jesus loved us and gave Himself up for us. These two things are inseparable, the gift, the offering, the immolation, the sacrifice.

Finally, Jesus communicated Himself to us. That was the last degree of the expression of His love. He comes to implant Himself in you, there to quicken as a seed and give you His own life.

These are the three aspects of the mystery. What shall I find on thus analysing the Holy Eucharist ?

If one remains for ever with one's own, it is because one loves them. Thou didst love us, Lord, and that was the reason for Thy remaining with us ; the only reason for Thy continual presence is Thy continual love. Thou didst love us, and Thy love was the reason of Thy self-sacrifice ; the only reason for Thy continual oblation is Thy continual love. Thou didst love us, and that was why Thou gavest Thyself.

In this I hold the whole of Thy secret ; Thy secret, so easily betrayed by the heart of a lover ; Thou remainedst with us, Thou offerest Thyself, Thou gavest Thyself !—Christ loved His own to the end.

Take, my Brethren, just the first aspect of this mystery of the Eucharist of which I am speaking to you this evening, the permanence of the presence of

the Divine Master; it is not the transitory act of one who is but in sojourn, but the permanent state of one Who loves and remains.

Take the moment when He said "I shall not leave you orphans." It was on the eve of His death; before His eyes were the Apostles whom He had so loved; He was going to His death. A father has no finer legacy to leave than a sublime doctrine which sustains the heart and gives promise of eternal life. Our Lord was the Teacher of teachers; the disciples called Him "Master of the Words of Eternal Life"; and He left them a legacy of words which remained so deeply engraved on their minds that after having heard Him they would listen to no one else.

Often the example of a father is a legacy which his children find hard to bear, even though in it lies their glory. Our Lord left us the most munificent of legacies. Not content with having given us His example, Jesus, knowing the weakness of His children, was as the father of a family who wished to be able to perpetuate his life and his memory beyond the tomb in a permanent and constant act. The father of a family cannot fulfil his wish; Jesus has the same wish; He is God, and can fulfil it.

He remained with His own; "I shall not leave you orphans." He wished always and everywhere to come to them, continually to inscribe on their hearts the words which they had heard, to communicate Himself to them, to emphasise the examples He had given them by a continuous act; He wished to remain with

them because life is sometimes difficult and its burden very heavy.

You heard that phrase, " I shall come to you," on Christmas Day. On that day it is touching, indeed, for you know how Jesus has realised His desire by coming to us ; our hearts go out to Him Who gave Himself for love in the touching smallness of infancy. Here is a perpetual Christmas which lasts through the centuries and is spread over every part of the world. Every day, everywhere, Jesus comes to us, and is born for us ; every soul has its Bethlehem, its Crib, its God, Who has been called once and forever " God with us," Emmanuel.

" I shall come to you in a perpetual birth " ; you, too, will bring Me your presents, the gold of your love to the King Who reigns over you, incense to the priest who offers sacrifice for you, myrrh (that is, accepted suffering) to the victim Who immolates Himself for you. This is the perpetual Christmas.

Take this phrase again, " I shall come to you " ; every part of the world will have its Calvary where Jesus dies ; He wishes every day to tread again the rough road of humiliation which He trod once before ; every part of the world will have its cenacle, the intimate spot to which every soul which has followed Jesus will invite Him ; there, too, He says " I shall come to you." He is looking for a morsel of bread which He is to change into Himself in order that each soul may possess Him in His entirety.

" I shall come to you " in the mystery of My suffering

life and Cross, of My death and resurrection; I will make the virtues of these mysteries penetrate within you; that is the commentary on *Non relinquam vos orphanos* and the meaning, surely, of the permanent presence of Our Lord in the Eucharist.

Consider, my Brethren, the aspect which the acts and words of the Gospel take on in the light of Our Lord's perpetual presence in the midst of us, of His bringing Himself as close to us as possible; they take on a character of vital reality; the actions were not only those of Our Saviour, they are the words of Our Lord Whose activity remains with us; the interpretation of the Gospels is made living by the dogma of the Real Presence.

Our Lord is going from Jerusalem to Galilee. He stops at Jacob's well; he stays there weary, waiting for a soul:—is not this an expressive and living symbol of Jesus Who is always here, waiting for a soul which goes about its daily occupation, to draw water in the monotony, the poverty, the annoyance of the business of life? The Samaritan woman found it troublesome to go and fetch her water; she found it difficult to draw what was necessary for the maintenance of her own life; it was then, while she was busy about her own work, that Jesus asked a small service of her that He might be able to do her a great one, a small remembrance that He might offer her an infinite hope; from this heart whose natural poverty had been made even more destitute by sin, He asked but a small gift. This woman's soul was a thing of small moment for

those who cannot see what a soul is nor appreciate its value ; it was of little worth in the eyes of the world which after degrading it despised it ; but He had no doubts of what she might become in the eyes of Him Who has done everything for her and Who at every moment can enrich her more.

Our Lord meets her in the middle of her work ; this poor woman finds Him on the road and from that moment everything is changed for her ; thanks to the presence and the word of Jesus, she looks towards Heaven, eternal hopes disclose themselves before her eyes which before were obstinately fixed on the earth. What happened to the Samaritan woman is an image of what we see every day ; a soul comes into this world ; Our Lord speaks to it of His eternity in such contrast to the transitory things of this world ; He gives it to drink the living water of eternal life ; then its horizon is enlarged and becomes infinite. By means of the Holy Eucharist Jesus is seated by the road-side of our daily occupations, He waits to instruct us and to raise us up again. Come then sometimes to seek Him where He is to be found ; come, and receive a more ardent courage, a sane direction for your steps, a thought to raise you up again ; for this is what you must ask of Him Who waits for souls.

Consider in the same way the scene of Bethany, that scene which can every day be renewed in all its living actuality at the foot of the altar. Our Lord goes to the house of Martha and Mary ; He comes here also, He is in our house at the same time that He is in His own.

Perhaps our soul is busied with a multitude of things and her immediate necessities, even when she is actually bowed at the feet of Jesus. *That*, my Brethren, is Martha who is busy and agitated.

Or, again, our soul may also be Mary, recollected at the feet of the Divine Saviour, listening to His teaching with her eyes fixed on Him. I think that every soul which is close to Our Lord's presence and teaching can receive what Mary received at Bethany; every soul can hear those words for which we envy Mary of Bethany: "She has chosen the better part." This is the part which God will give us in the days of our earthly life—for Jesus gives Himself on earth that He may perpetually give Himself in Heaven.

Take any scene you like out of the Gospel, interpret it in the light of the Real Presence, and you will see that the mysteries of the Gospel days are the mysteries of to-day; thus our life is lived in the light of the Gospel and everything assumes the character of the most touching reality.

Listen to the words of Jesus in the same way. Where do you hear them most clearly? Where will they be more real than here? Consider the parable of the Good Shepherd. This parable has a living character when you hear it spoken by the lips and from the heart of one Who is present here and now: "I am the Good Shepherd—not only was I, when I was on earth, visible to My Apostles, but now also—I give My life for My sheep, and My sheep know Me."

It is not a matter of reading these ideas into the

Blessed Sacrament; that is not the point, my Brethren; what we have to do is to find what Jesus wishes to put there and what He wishes us to find there, the stream of water which sustains the soul and gives it drink. Where, then, are we to draw the nourishment which proceeds from the words of Our Lord, if not before the Blessed Sacrament? Where are we to understand these words, if not before the Real Presence? where shall we best understand the Sermon on the Mount, the Beatitudes—proclaiming the blessedness of the merciful—if not before Him Who has found in His mercy the means of an all-embracing forgiveness? How best understand the blessing of meekness if not before Him Who is infinitely meek in His Sacrament, infinitely humble, at the mercy of all? How shall we best understand the abnegation of self, the blessedness of poverty, if not from the mouth of Him Who has put off His own form in the Sacrament of the Eucharist?

Consider these words as being said at this very moment; let us interpret them by the living commentary of the Real Presence; there they pulse with life, there the idea and the concrete fact are linked together and profound reality works upon our hearts.

"Come to me all ye who suffer"—how shall we best understand this saying, if not by realising that it comes from Jesus Whose irrefutable presence is with us? not only does He wish to comfort us, but He has the power to do so; do you not hear these words, "Tell him that I wish to speak to him," coming from the

heart of Jesus, perpetually present in the Eucharist? there He will make our hearts hear His message more intimately, speaking in turn to each one alone; in that silence in which He speaks to us we shall hear Him more profoundly.

Take all the sayings of the Gospel and bring them into relation with the Real Presence; there the Master Himself is actually speaking, and everything is silent before Him. Listen to His words of sacrifice and humiliation; they are austere, they point out our serious duty, but at the same time they are infinitely gentle, spoken by love present and sacrificed.

And what are our duties in face of the Real Presence, before this mystery which is unceasingly renewed by the goodness of Jesus? Our duty, my Brethren, is to have great confidence, often to direct our thoughts towards Jesus, for we have no right to think, to feel, to rejoice, to be sad, as we would had not Our Lord come into this world. When the Prophet Isaiah described the new nature of the modern time which was to come, he compared what God was before, the God of fear, with what God has become, the Saviour. "*Ecce Deus salvator meus, fiducialiter agam et non timebo*"—then indeed shall I take an infinite confidence, for love dominates fear and will bring me close to God.

Such was the effect of the Incarnation. Jesus comes to take part in our life in order that we, of our own will, may bring Him into the things which cause us joy or sorrow, and that we may speak to Him about

our sadnesses and our frailties. In that there need be no fear.

When the patriarch Joseph made himself known to his brethren and said to them " I am Joseph," I believe that the brother with whom he was most pleased was not the one who was the most dismayed, nor the one who felt most fear in thinking of his crime, but the one who scanned the look of his outraged brother with the most tenderness and confidence. He paid him the most honour, for he knew his heart and counted on his great gentleness and his infinite goodness.

It seems to me that it is the same with Our Lord. When we are before the Real Presence let us have the same feelings as those who approached Jesus when He was going through the towns of Galilee. They consulted Him on all their affairs ; the sick were brought close to Him ; all their difficulties and requests were confided to Him. For them prayer was not relegated to a corner of the day, confined to a few moments to which no thought is given when they have once been indifferently spent ; prayer was for them a strict necessity which brought them to God and made them express their gratitude for a favour immediately they had received it ; prayer blossomed out into an act of hope ; they made a prayer of their gladness, bringing it back to God and confiding it to the heart of Him Who was its cause.

If they were sad, if a sorrow ate into their hearts, they did not think of keeping it to themselves while He Who was curing all ills was there. They did not

consider His presence as useless, as not there, they did not shut their doors as though Jesus were unable or unwilling to cure them.—" Lord, Lord, my daughter is on the point of dying, come to my house "—so their very anxiety was transformed and became an act of faith which paid honour to the power and goodness of Jesus. By bringing the Divine Master into their lives they sought to bring their life into His, and so they did bring every feeling they had into relation with Him.

Be assured, my Brethren, that since the Incarnation we may not have any profound joy—the joy, for example, of one who sees a soul awake to the things of God—nor in the same way may we have any sorrow as though Jesus were not there too. How He is wronged on this point ! A priest cannot refrain from the most painful reflections when he sees the despairing sorrow of souls who know, nevertheless, that Our Lord is at hand ; they have proof of His presence, but the priest can see no difference between these souls and those who are unaware of it.

We must examine ourselves as to the way in which we allow ourselves to be overcome by distress. Our Lord does not allow this misunderstanding in the very bosom of His Real Presence ; it is a serious sin in souls who should not sorrow as though Jesus were unwilling or unable to help them.

The perpetuation of the Incarnation in the perpetuation of the Eucharist should be of assistance to us. What we must do, my Brethren, before the Real Presence, is to bring Jesus into all our feelings.

Prayer is not an ephemeral thing whose appearance is limited to a certain time ; it is the state of a soul which has no anxieties which it does not confide to God, no sufferings into which He does not enter ; no joy for which it does not thank Him ; it is the state of a soul which tells Our Lord everything which agitates it, of a soul which says " Jesus is here, close to me ; I have no right to shut the door and to live as though He were not there."

These, my Brethren, are the simple feelings with which I would leave you before Our Lord really present to you. Our joy, O Lord, our sorrow, the anxiety, all the emotions we feel so profoundly, and through which our life passes in a moment, these we will never experience again, without confiding them to Thee, and bringing them to Thy sympathy, for Thou art truly there, Thou hast chosen for Thy glory to enter willingly into our feelings, to hear our prayers, and our petitions, no matter how trivial they may be For Thee they are always important, since Thou lovest us and cherishest us, and since we are Thy children called to follow Thee to Heaven.

II

JESUS CHRIST THE PRIEST

MY Brethren, the first two mysteries which are concerned with Our Lord's infancy show us Jesus coming as the King to reign over human society, and receiving the adoration of the shepherds and the Magi. But He was not only King ; He was priest and victim too. The phrase, "*Tu es sacerdos in æternum secundum ordinem Melchisedec*," cannot be separated from the opening words of the Psalm which we sing at Vespers : "*Dixit Dominus Domino meo: sede a dextris meis*." Our Lord is sent to offer on behalf of souls a sacrifice of which He is at once the object and the subject, a sacrifice which He offers Himself in His own person.

Hence it is that the various mysteries of Our Lord, Christmas, the Epiphany, the Purification, are linked together and show the different qualities of Him Who has come to this world. The last mystery appeals to those souls who know God more intimately.

The mystery of Christmas is so moving that all souls, even those who are not deeply pious, have some understanding of it—though not in all its aspects—while the sacerdotal mysteries leave a large number of

Christian souls indifferent. At His Presentation Our Lord was accompanied by few souls. There was Simeon, and there was Anna; in number a small company, but great in the virtues of those of whom it was formed.

Very few souls penetrate the sacerdotal mysteries. If we start from the principle that Jesus is the only true priest, we will see that it was what Jesus felt in His heart that inspired this principle, and is still the cause of all that we see.

Consider the disposition of His heart as He came into the world. There is not one among you who has not thought: Ah, Our Lord was only too happy to give Himself to the prayers of the old man who had called to Him, who had been so patient in waiting, so constant in hope. Readily and gladly Our Lord showed Himself to this soul which had waited for Him, wept for Him, and whom He had allowed to weep. Even though it is not right for a creature to allow another to weep, this is the right of the Lord; He does so that the soul may feel all that it lacks and that it may appreciate Him Who fulfils all its desires, Who is immensity itself, beyond Whom there is nothing to wish for.

Jesus was impelled to throw Himself into the arms of Simeon. That was His first feeling. The hands which the saintly old man stretched out to Him are the hands of the Jewish people whose wait has been long and hard, for not yet has Heaven let fall its dew; they are the hands of humanity; powerless to act,

they wait until God is ready to bless them and to fill them with supernatural works. Our Lord sees them with a feeling of quick desire, of ardent prayer; this long wait has been imposed that men may be convinced of their impotence, and these hands are in the end to receive Our Lord so tenderly and with such joy.

So Jesus comes to the arms of the aged Simeon. These are the words of Malachy, "*Ecce venio*," which show that Jesus felt an urgency in His soul. These words are not words which Jesus used Himself, but He says them again and again to the soul to whom He comes after its sorrows, after a long widowhood, to the soul which suffers and waits.

The first feeling then which Jesus felt in His heart was to throw Himself into the arms of Simeon to overwhelm him with joy and hope. Anna, too, brings her share of long-nourished faith, of sorrows long supported while waiting for Him Who was to come.

For Our Lady there was an admixture of sorrow. If she rejoiced at one moment, if her heart swelled as she saw Jesus in the arms of the saintly old man, she felt at the same time the sorrow which is inseparable from the mysteries of sacrifice. Already the dense shadow of Calvary looms large, the crown of the sacerdotal mysteries. It seems to me it would be impossible to enjoy present happiness, if we could look into the future as Mary could. What little joy we would have in things which nevertheless lighten our hearts, could we see that these things will be taken away from us and disappear. Did we know where one we love

dearly would be or what would happen to some other friend in the future, it would be impossible to enjoy present happiness.

Jesus saw the hands which received Him with such joy in the name of the Jewish people ; but He saw them not only as they were at that moment ; He saw them too, with His divine penetration, as they would be one day, thirty years after. The people which was now saluting Him in the person of their priest, the people which, in the person of Simeon, was now pressing Him to its bosom and praying the child born into this world to give fresh warmth to its frozen heart, this same people Jesus saw clamouring, thirty years after, for the death of the Samaritan, the seducer, the criminal, the blasphemer.

Thus there is in all the mysteries an element of sorrow. Our Lord suffers in His soul the injuries and blasphemies of those for whom He comes to atone. It is a mystery of sorrow and of joy at the same time.

But there is another aspect which goes still deeper, and which will be appreciated by those souls who are associated with certain of Our Lord's intimate thoughts and initiated into the meaning of His oblation and suffering. This mystery is the more sorrowful as it took place in the Temple, in the Temple of Jesus. From His first glance Jesus saw the priest and the High Priest, not as they were at that day, but as they would be on the day when they would condemn Him. Then those who should be devoted to the service of God would be His persecutors and would make Him

undergo sufferings that touched the inmost parts of His soul. They would turn their eyes from Him when they should be directed to Him. What increased His sorrow was that His own priests, who were made to reconcile the hearts of men with their God and His Word, were to slaughter Him. Jesus shares the intimate sorrow of this mystery of oblation with certain souls whom He especially draws to follow Him.

Thus it is in the Temple that Our Lord begins to exercise and fulfil His mission of priest and victim. Jesus looks upon His own ! He loves them ; and as He looks upon them He makes Himself the victim ; "*Oblatus est quia ipse voluit*," He offered Himself, and why ? because He loved us : "*Dilexit nos*." He looks tenderly upon those for whom He offers Himself ; He must see them in order to accept His function of victim.

Not only did He accept but He made the choice with willing impetuosity. Both St Paul and St John tell us that it was because Christ loved us that He offered Himself. In this expression is contained the active vivacity of the heart of Jesus. The heart leaps out and goes to the one whom it wishes to possess, with an impetuous rush of love that cannot be contained—does not the Eternal Word often come to a temple empty of worshippers ?—so Christ came, urged by the desire to accept the sacrifice and the suffering. Not only was He a voluntary victim ; He was also a priest acting spontaneously, enthusiastically, with a

complete devotion which brings the whole heart into the taking and offering of the victim.

Here we must recognise Jesus as making the first public offering of Himself, as the priest consecrating in our name, as the mediator of the New Testament; in the temple He is always present, we cannot enter it without seeing Him engaged in the office which He has fulfilled.

He says of the tabernacle, " It was for your sake that I placed Myself there." There He offers Himself, using the hands of another whose thought is so weak, whose heart is so far from what his hands are doing, that he hardly knows the significance of his act. From the tabernacle He comes to the temple of your heart. There He accepts the part of victim, there He is fixed. He looks upon you just as He looked upon Simeon and His own Holy Mother.

When the old man was given this fresh youth and happiness he was prepared to accept everything. As God had put all He had in the gift which He made to him, Simeon felt that he must give all that he had. He had no other wish before Jesus Who was so eager to offer Himself, to give Himself, to be the victim; while our hearts are cold and negligent and find difficulties in little things, some of which we even refuse to give to Jesus, even though He asks them in the name of His love. The question we should ask about this mystery is: " Could He have given more, Who now asks you to be faithful ? "

Pray for some approach to the dispositions of

Simeon at the moment when he held Our Lord in his arms. Had one asked him then " What more do you desire ? " he would have repeated " Nunc dimittis." He had no more ties with the earth which had brought his Saviour to birth, and had one said to him " What would you refuse to Him Who has given His whole self to you ? " what would he have answered ? Let us pray to the old man Simeon to enlighten our hearts, and let us ask him, too, that we may not appreciate Our Lord's coming only as a boon, as a passing cause of joy. Too many souls come to Communion saying that they are sad and wish to be consoled. Such an attitude is not wrong, and God blesses the thought. But there is something more ; one must go further and say " I come to Communion that I may be strengthened and that I may not refuse God what He asks of me. I will be glad if God is always exacting towards me, for the more He has given me the more I wish to give back to Him. I want to make the sacrifice of self with Him Who sacrificed Himself for me. I want to be immolated with Him Who was generous to me, generous even to folly."

III

THE ACTION OF THE EUCHARIST IN OUR SOULS

I HAVE tried, my Brethren, to give you some idea of what Our Lord has done for us in the Holy Eucharist. His love was too great to allow Him to descend from the Cross. He made, accordingly, a new cross for Himself on the altar where He never ceases to immolate Himself again. There He is "God with us," God sacrificed for us. At Mass, when the bread and wine are consecrated, we find again the very scene of Calvary. Jesus wished to leave us in the Mass a living image of Calvary, not simply as a remembrance, but as a continual re-enactment of His life, His sacrifice, His death, and His Passion. The priest is led to the altar by Jesus ; at His direction —for He is the one true priest—he speaks the words which are not his words but the words of Him Whose minister he is ; he makes Jesus present on the altar where He has wished to immolate Himself. Then, it is actually to Calvary that we are transported. The living are there, face to face with Him Who rose up from the earth that He might draw them to Him until the grace they needed should come to them from the height of the Cross. The dead, too, are brought to

Calvary, those who are loved and have died ; they live again before Him Who suffered for them and Who still applies to them the virtue of His blood and the fruits of His sacrifice, the countless host of millions of souls preceded by the sign of the Cross. Then the action of Calvary is repeated. The dead rise and shatter the gravestone ; the veil that shuts off the sanctuary from their place of waiting is rent in two from top to bottom, and they enter into the Heavenly Jerusalem.

But there is something more : after the living image of Calvary Jesus Himself is distributed to the faithful. He comes to us hidden under the white shroud of the sacred species ; He comes into our breasts to bring the fruit of His life and sacrifice. In the act of Consecration, when He offered Himself for us and the priest raised Him up to Heaven, He was devoting Himself to God ; now it is to us that He gives Himself, coming down to the faithful who prepare their hearts and their trembling lips. Herein we see the two passions of the Heart of Jesus—how He lives for His Father, and how He lives for His beloved children and His giving of Himself to them. Would that I could say of each one of the hearts that receives Him what the prophet said of the sepulchre that received Him : " His sepulchre shall be glorious." Would that the breasts that contain the body of the Saviour were glorious too, that they could allow for the radiation of the vigour of Him Whom they enclose, that they should make Him loved Who is loving and worthy to be

loved, that they should allow themselves to be permeated by the leaven of life that has been set in them. In that is the third Eucharistic act.

Our Lord was led to sacrifice Himself for us to the Father by a demand of His heart that could not be denied. His love then made Him wish to remain in the midst of us. But this love is not satisfied even with this ; it still lacks something, a union, an intimate union by which it may actually penetrate into the soul. As the work of the Incarnation is in a way continued by the Real Presence, so its highest peak, the Redemption, is continued by the Eucharistic sacrifice. Finally, the work of love finds its perfection and full achievement when Jesus is incarnate in each one of us, and when an angel could come to each of us and say what he said to Mary, when she enshrined in the Son of God, in a substantial and living form, "*Dominus tecum*." This is the very coronation of the Incarnation, the final union of which the Heart of Jesus dreamed, the full satisfaction of His love by communion.

Communion is the complete achievement of the love of Jesus, by which He penetrates the soul of each of us and takes possession of our hearts. It is neither the general union established by the Incarnation, nor the reconciliation effected by the Redemption, but the individual application of the Incarnation and the Redemption to each one of us intimately.

You will understand that this mystery is the most natural thing in the world. When we wish to make

a gift to someone we love we would wish to make it in some way partake of ourselves, and the more it did so the more happy would we be in offering it. If it is a portrait, we would wish to animate this representation, which is an image rather of death than of life, so that soul might be contained in it, the eyes open and gazing on the loved one ; well, it is not His portrait nor His image that Jesus has given us, but His very self with all that His nature entails. If a man is giving a book as a remembrance, a book in which he has expressed all the feelings of his heart, into which he has put all of his soul that can be put into a book—not that it is much, for life itself cannot be so expressed—still, he is glad to give to the one he loves even so much of his soul as he has been able to introduce into his work. So in the Eucharist Our Lord wishes to come to write Himself upon our hearts, to entwine Himself with them ; He wishes to live in our hearts with all that He has, with all that He is, with the abundant vigour of His being.

The Eucharist is the production of goodness allied with omnipotence. The love of God has fulfilled in a transcendent manner what the love of man could only dream of. Human love is as a glimmer of light which helps us to some understanding of the noble and infinite love of Him Whose nobility and beauty lack nothing.

Jesus was God ; one day the Word of God took human nature ; He united the two natures which were in Him, the human and the divine which was already

His, that He might concentrate them in the Holy Eucharist, the smallest of His creations, but yet the greatest and the most tender. In the Eucharist He is present with His divine nature, with His human soul, with all His heart, with all His thoughts, feelings, love, in a word, with all His being which He has confined in a piece of bread, fitting it to our standard that He may fill our mouths and hearts.

Such is the Holy Eucharist. Jesus went through different stages of being; from childhood He progressed to grown manhood, thence to suffering manhood and death; each one of these stages, up to the Resurrection, is a mystery which is a channel of grace for us; under the form of a piece of bread in which He gives Himself to us, Jesus has united them all.

When He was on earth, there were few who actually came close to him and had the joy and happiness of touching Him. He now gives Himself to all men, and gives them to touch something greater and better than the mere fringe of His garment. He does not say with astonishment, almost reproachfully, as He spoke before to the woman in the Gospel: "I felt virtue go forth from Me"; now He has but one desire, to feel the virtue go forth from Him and penetrate the soul to whom He gives Himself.

This is the passionate desire and prayer of the heart of Jesus, for He wishes to apply to us the merits of His humanity. In that desire lies the *raison d'être* of Holy Communion.

After the Resurrection He said to Mary Magdalen

" Do not touch Me." The new glory which enveloped Him was His rejuvenated and deified humanity ; He appeared to her in His risen body, in the glorified humanity itself with which He is clothed before His Father.

But now He does not say " Do not touch Me " to the soul to whom He unites Himself ; in spite of His great glory He nevertheless gives Himself to her. He says instead " Touch Me, for you can never touch Me enough, you can never fill yourself deeply enough with Me, with My Redemption, with the merit of My shining and glorious humanity. I pray you, by whom I have been received, do not limit My action ; I have descended into you not to be static but active ; let My divinity, then, work within you that it may supernaturalise whatever in you is too human or too earthly."

He came to bring us life ; therefore He is now present under the form of food ; He wished to be the source of all life, of all progress. He asks us to let Him work upon us because He wishes to live within us in the glorious risen form in which He was to appear to His Father at the Ascension. This is the most elementary conception of Holy Communion and the easiest to grasp, the notion of the coming of Jesus into us, with all that He has, that He may work within us, warm our hearts again, and reanimate our souls by contact with His own. That is the gift which He makes to us ; when we come to Him in Communion, then, we are in the presence of divinity.

If a soul says to me " To-day I have seen God," I will ask of it " What difference is there in you since God is so close to you, actually within you ? " If the soul is truly permeated by Him Whom she has received, there can be but one answer : " How insignificant I see that I am and fallen from what a height ! " Confusion is the first duty, the first impression of a soul who has seen God pass before it in all His grandeur, or rather in the terrible goodness which filled the beloved disciple with awe.

" I have seen God ; I have approached His sacred table." Let the soul which speaks so prove it to me by its actions. Let me see the effect in those whose life is so lukewarm, a mere sequence of forgetful omissions, whose life, we may say, consists in not living. God is action in life, a spirit that is ever active. You who have seen God, does God live in you ? If you have approached Christ, let me see the proof of it in your actions. Are you devoted as Jesus Christ was devoted ? For when He finds His heart's rest in the gift of Himself, then His anxious love, ever sensitive for men, can be satisfied only by an equal devotion.

Where is your devotion, where is your charity ? Prove to me that at the moment when He entered into you, you sought to be humble. If, when seeing the activity of His life, you are not devoted to Him, it is because the sacrifice of God has not penetrated into your soul, the spirit of Jesus has not entered into your heart. The sure proof of the presence of God is the

confusion of the creature, its desire, in spite of its insignificance, to do something for Him Who has done everything for it. The goodness which is communicated should act by diffusing goodness, love, and devotion ; for, my Brethren, the effect of the Holy Eucharist is not only to unite us to God, to bring us into contact with Him, but to unite souls among themselves at the same time as they are each united to Jesus.

This action of the Sacrament is particularly noticeable. At the first Communion, the first Eucharistic table, the Saviour shows by one of His prayers what effect He wishes to obtain. He was fully present in each one of the fragments which He gave to the Apostles. After that Holy Communion it was indeed He that lived in them, and all of them lived in Him. As a result they were all united in Him, " making but one body, living by one and the same bread," says St Paul. We may well learn from the prayer which Our Lord then offered the effect which His heart desired—to put an end to the dissensions which poison life and as a result of which this life does not give a tenth part of the joys which it could give, but is full instead of bitterness and division. Wherefore He said : " May the creatures in whom I live, in whom I am multiplied, may they be united together, may they be one and the same body " —" May they be one as I and the Father are one."

This union was realised in the Acts of the Apostles, and the first deacons could point to the Christians as forming one people of the faithful, seating themselves

by the table of life to make but one body after they had received the sacrament of unity.

There is much talk, my Brethren, of the unification of the human race by the means we have of rapid communication. But as things are, to what does this amount ? The only result is to bring the hatreds and enmities closer and thus make them more envenomed and cruel. People are quicker to turn to each other ; what unity is there in that ? I know that there are ideas which are grouped together in imposing manifestations, but are these the ideas of charity, are they not rather the grouping together of certain opinions, only a common protest against other religious ideas ? Do you see in them an indication of charity or a thought of hatred ?

On the other hand, consider the men in the Church of Notre Dame who have come with one and the same thought, who have left on one side what divides them and see only what brings them closer together. They are united in one idea—to have a good and pure heart to offer to Jesus, to try to forget every enmity. That is the necessary and immediate preparation for Holy Communion. Those who so approach it can have no hatred for anyone, they can only have love for Jesus and for souls. There is an union which is not a hostile protest against others, but a truer aspiration to unity, in which hearts are really joined together in one thought ; wishing to draw everything to Jesus. " Be our King, Jesus," they say, " that there may be no other kingship in the hearts of men. Be our priest

and watch over us. Bring to the soul, Jesus, that same life, that same thought of self-forgetfulness, which is the foundation of the only unity which can really unite."

If you say to me " I have climbed Thabor, I have come close, I have seen, but I have something against my brother, I cannot forget, I cannot forgive," I cannot understand you, I can no longer recognise the action of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist, for His desire is foiled. He wished you to be as grains of wheat united in one body, which are ground together as the wheat is ground to make one whole. And you have refused ! How many times has He not asked you ! The most terrible reproach which one can bring against a Christian soul is to say " Here is a soul which approached Jesus, in Whom he has lived, and yet this soul can forget nothing, can never forgive, which after inclining for a moment, draws back proud and inaccessible, strong in its pretended rights." But what are these rights before the duties which are imposed on it by Him Who comes to the soul through His sacrifice ? The heart of Jesus demands and necessitates in Holy Communion forgiveness and the forgetting of injuries. The duty is imposed in the name of that gift which has never had its equal. Without forgiveness you would be lighting a little flame, trying to make it burn in water, in an element which puts it out and quenches it immediately, you would be attempting an impossibility.

Another effect of the Eucharist is to purify us.

There are some souls which are fearful and put off

their approach to the Eucharist to the last moment. . . . They would wish to be perfect to come to Him Who alone can make them perfect. To these souls who say " I have not worked enough upon myself, I must wait till I am content with myself, until I have merited " (as if one could merit without Him Who brings all merits and applies them to our assistance), to these I would reply : " But Holy Communion effaces all venial faults, all faults that are due to frailty. It contains the elements of love if only one has salutary dispositions." We must not then look at our faults too closely but must consider them in the light of the goodness of God ; that is the best way to obtain perfect contrition. When Magdalen saw the disorders of her life in the light of the divine mercy, how much more clearly and correctly did she see them ! Contrition penetrated into her and began to submerge her soul in the desire to be less unworthy of Him Who came to her ; this contrition wiped out all venial sins after Jesus had forgiven the mortal ones. Her love was awakened by the goodness of Jesus communicating itself to her, and her faults disappeared as the clouds under the action of the sun.

Have no fear of venial sins and the imperfections of human nature. Come to the sun which scatters them, come and melt such ice as remains in your soul in the warmth of the Holy Eucharist. At the same time as the Eucharist brings remission of venial sins, it is a safeguard against mortal sins ; for it is Our Lord lending the aid of His strength to the being which has

not the strength to walk, which is always falling. When He saw that the people had no bread, did He not say that He feared to see them fall with weariness by the roadside? That is the idea that inspired the Eucharist. If any thought, then, or any evil desire has crossed your mind, it will be effaced by the goodness of God. Temptation will disappear as soon as it is confided to Him.

There is nothing more dangerous than things which smoulder in the heart; come and tell these things to Our Lord in Communion, come and exhaust their strength and find a feeling of shame which will be your remedy and your preservative, which will be a sure support to your soul—and to your body, for the Fathers of the Church do not forget this part of you which is subject to so many miseries and infirmities.

The Fathers compare Jesus to the tree of life which nourishes us in obedience to reason and to God. There He sets up in us the work of mortification which is the condition of life for our body, the work of sanctification. You see the humanity of Jesus curing the sick. At His approach leprosy disappeared; it will be the same with us.

Finally we find in Holy Communion the promise of future immortality. St Irenaeus speaks of this, and with reason, for it is the unanimous feeling of the Church. Those whom Thou hast touched, Lord, whom Thou hast cured, whom Thou hast vitalised by Thy presence, are preserved from final and definite corruption. Thou hast but to pass by for Thy trace never

to be obliterated ; it is from Thy tabernacle that life issues.

This is why, my Brethren, Jesus, not being content with taking to Himself our human nature, wished to immolate Himself in the state in which He would be the most loving and the most loved. He wishes to descend into each one of us, and He will not have us say Him no.

Lord Jesus, after having developed the reasons for which Thou didst remain on this earth and having unveiled the reason which guided Thy heart, there is but one word more for us to add. Thou wishest to live in the midst of us ; we will remember that Thou art with us, Thou, the spirit and the life. Thou wishest to sacrifice Thyself for us ; we will unite our sacrifice to Thine. Thou wishest to descend into us to the inmost parts of our hearts ; we will always let Thee work within us, live in our souls, for it is Thy glory, Thy desire, Thy love that wishes it, and because Thou wishest to lead us to eternal life.

IV

THE EUCHARIST UNITES US TO THOSE WHOM WE HAVE LOST

IT is before the Sacred Heart of Jesus that we are going to meditate a few moments on the devotion of which this day (All Souls' Day) reminds us. Mysterious memories, even mournful, if one does not think of them in the light of the Heart of Jesus. The Sacred Heart is the sun ; this comparison has often been used ; a sun which lightens at the same time two worlds, the world of the living and the world of those who are no longer. God sees the country of the just, formed of all those who are living before Him. Those who are no longer living for us are yet living for Him ; He is their light, their King, even, as we say in to-day's Office, " He before Whom all are full of life," He Who knows them.

In the Gospel Jesus speaks to the dead and they hear His voice. He knows where they are, He knows what He must say to call them to Him, and to make them come just where He wishes them to be. The kingdom of the dead is thus lightened and brought to life again by the same love which brings light and life to the kingdom in which we still remain. It is already

a consoling thought and a hopeful one that we are able to call Him the King of the living and of the dead, for all the dead are still living before Him.

One might apply to Jesus, the King of the dead, the Parable of the Good Shepherd : He continues to lead His sheep ; whether they are on this earth or not, is He not always their leader ? All His sheep know Him, they hear the voice of the Shepherd, this voice which makes them start with joy if they are in Heaven, or with hope if they are in Purgatory. He alone can give to these a feeling of the joy to come, the prospect that they will one day see Him.

All souls belong to Our Lord, those who have left this life with a repentant look on the years that have gone by, on so many duties neglected, on the poverty of their works, on the emptiness of their days ; those, too, are His who have turned towards Him with longing and hope, those who have said to Him " Oh give me back a few years and I will consecrate them to Your service ; those who, like the soul of the good thief, have seen their life afresh in the light of the death of Jesus, the abundance of their misery, and the super-abundance of His mercy ; all those who have heard the voice which calls the dying to the kingdom of God : " Thou shalt be with Me in the kingdom of Paradise."

He is the King, the Shepherd of all these souls. All live before Him, for all, for one moment, even though it may be the last moment, have turned towards Him Who gives them life. It is from this that we draw our hope.

Jesus loves His dead when He puts into the heart of the living a memory that cannot be effaced and a sort of violent desire to do something for them, to offer for them some sacrifices, to accept the troubles of life, to refer everything to this act of charity which is often only an act of justice, perhaps even of reparation. There is a thought which makes our duties lighter and which can help us more than anything to support all that may be put upon us.

One can ask in the name of the dead the greatest and most lasting sacrifices, a complete abnegation of self which seems to tear the soul from itself. God wishes the living to be as those charitable persons in the Gospel who brought to Him those who could not come of themselves; the paralytic, who had not the strength to come to Jesus, finds some friends to carry him to the feet of the divine healer.

Our Lord had particular love for the souls in Purgatory on the day when, after having given His Apostles His adorable flesh and blood (the price, that is, of His sufferings, and the guarantee of His Resurrection, the merit of His death and the hope of eternal life), He said to them "Do this in commemoration of Me." He had these souls of the dead in mind, too, and it was for them that He was instituting the Sacrament in which He established His permanent presence; it was for them that He wished to merit by His suffering; with them He wished to arise again and reign for eternity. And He placed in our hands this ineffable gift, and this merit, this triumph—the

whole of Himself—thinking of the dead who are dear to us and dear to His heart.

He wished to be their King, reigning by His glorious Cross which dominates the whole world. He descends to the place of the dead who are awaiting the Resurrection. He goes to bring them the fruit of His Passion. His merit has been won for all, and He is as much King of Limbo as He is King of this world. He reigns both over the earth and under the earth. The dead break their gravestones and enter into Jerusalem ; so the souls of the blessed overcome the obstacles which keep them from entering the heavenly Jerusalem, see the walls of their prison shattered, and the gate of Heaven open. The veil of the Temple, which separated the Holy of Holies from the worship of the profane, is rent from top to bottom at the cry of Jesus and exposes the very depths of the Sanctuary to view ; so Purgatory becomes Heaven.

Jesus has indeed loved the blessed who are dead. And we must recognise, too, that He loved us at the same time that He proposed to us this devotion to the dead. For this devotion is a source for us of feelings which help us to make reparation, and prompts us to thoughts which are particularly fruitful and vigorous. I will not say that this is only for those of us who are already well advanced, it is true that those who are still at the gate find in it an active stimulus. Often there is no other key to open certain hearts but the memory of one whom they have lost by death. This memory is a source of good, for it brings the soul back

upon itself and makes it feel the need of returning to the fold. This is surely a matter of common experience.

But this devotion is beneficial to those souls, too, who desire to advance, to the more perfect souls who wish to do something for Our Lord. For Our Lord calls them by that devotion to co-operate in the good which He wishes to spread, in the work which He wishes to complete, whose crown is the eternal possession of God in Paradise.

By the same means we learn detachment from self. We leave our own interests aside and lose the egoism which sometimes creeps into piety in the desire to glorify Jesus by the glory of the souls of the blessed.

Our Lord, then, showed His love for us by inspiring us with this devotion. He satisfied the most ardent desire of the human heart. We have a horror of death, the separation of the body and the soul, and we call everything dead which separates what should be indissolubly united. Death is a violent contradiction ; we feel that we must at any cost break the barrier that is so brutally set up. Our Lord has broken it by the Eucharist. It is in the presence of the Master that we find those again who have left us but who are now with Him. He is as near to them as He is to us ; He is as present to them as He is present to us.

When two beings who love one another are separated, they take a certain pleasure in each seeing an object which the other is seeing at the same time, a star, for example, or the sun ; it consoles them somewhat to say, " However far away he may be, he, too, is seeing

this star, this sun, at which I am looking." So our souls may say, " Jesus Who is present here is present also to the souls who seem so far from me." So we feel that we are brought closer to the dead ; and so the goodness of God makes union with Him union, too, with those who have left us.

There is in that an infinite delicacy and a most consoling thought.

But the Eucharist is also a sacrifice. We hold in our hands Him Who is the price of our redemption, we are armed with the all-powerful virtue of His blood, which not only makes virtues grow upon the earth but ripens the flowers of virtue into fruits which are stored in the barns of the Heavenly Father. The sacrifice is put at the disposal of our love.

The soul often feels a bitter regret in the midst of the most profound sorrow—one might have done so much and one did nothing ; now one would wish to do so much and the chance has gone !

You must not feel that regret. Jesus has already seen that impotence so full of remorse. He has had pity on those who suffer so much because they can no longer do anything. He has given Himself to be offered for those who are dead, He has placed Himself at the disposal of this too late and powerless love. Again what a refinement of goodness !

Finally, at Communion, Jesus descends into us and then we can speak to Him of those to whom He is present. He is in us and we ask Him to do something for those souls, to show them the marvellous brilliance

of His glory. He is their hope, and we ask Him to turn this hope into possession. He is their joy, and we ask Him to be their joy at once and not to make them wait any longer.

We see then how the power of death has been overthrown under the loving footsteps of Jesus. Was I not right when I told you that when faced by Him, by His sacrifice, by His love, by His Eucharist, the redoubtable problem of death disappears ? The consoling dogma of the Communion of Saints lightens our land of exile and the prolonged exile of Purgatory. A ray of light shines in the midst of the most bitter tears. Such should be our thoughts before the Eucharist.

V

MEDITATION ON THE PASSION

(*Good Friday.*)

THE Apostle St Paul made no pretence of knowing anything but Jesus and Jesus crucified. On this day, my Brethren, you would not suffer anyone to speak to you of anything else. You know well what I am going to tell you, but you would have me do so none the less, as though you did not know. There is never a time when we do not feel that we must hear the story of these sufferings of Christ and of this death whence we draw our life. When He was raised on the Cross the Divine Saviour spoke to those who suffer and are weary. He has put His Cross and His death between them and their difficulties. His words are for all of us, for all of us suffer, all have sinned, and all must die. The sinner finds hope when He comes under the shelter of this Cross, where the justice of God has struck us so grievously. Indeed, my Brethren, one may die in the shadow of this Cross.

There is nothing more sad than to suffer and for one's cries to be lost in emptiness. When there seems

to be no answer, as our cries fall in the desert, it is as though we died and lapsed into the void.

But can God trouble Himself with our troubles? This tremendous God, at Whose immensity and infinity St Paul the Apostle exclaimed, "Lord, what is there in common between Thee and me? Thou art so great and I am so infinitely small?"—between this God and us is there not an infinite space in which our sufferings may be lost? There are times when sin almost makes us despair; is there forgiveness for sin?

Your answer is in the death of Christ.

Jesus comes to give us the answer to these objections. Yes, God is far from us; there is an immense chaos between Him and us, but it is overcome by His immense love. The Word has become flesh; from this we may see how near our sorrow is to God. Not only did Jesus suffer but He was presented as the man of sorrows. Jesus made Himself man for our sins. When, then, you consider your sins, look at the Crucifix and see in Whose blood they have been washed; consider this death of Christ, and see whether the death of man is not precious to God since He, for whose sake He blesses death, has already suffered human death. The Cross is our only help in our sorrows; at the foot of the Cross we can find courage to support our sufferings; it is good for us, too, to lay our sins at the foot of the Cross; and hence we salute the Cross from the bottom of our grateful hearts:

"*O Crux, Ave!*"

You wish to hear, my Brethren, the story of the sufferings of Christ. There was no suffering which He did not bear ; His heart, His sacred body, was closed to none ; He bore them all. His Passion began at the Last Supper. This was the hour for which He had longed. His whole heart was open for the supreme gift of Himself. His great happiness was in this giving of Himself, of Himself with all that was His. He had succeeded in instilling His whole being into His gift, and this was His great joy. But there is one thought which He cannot keep back, and a sigh forces its way from His heart to His lips ; " One of you shall betray Me." All the joy of His heart has gone and in its place is sadness. He looks round at His disciples and on all sides He hears their touching protests. " Never will I abandon Thee." " Come, let us die with Him." That was how the disciples felt at the Last Supper. There is something very sad, my Brethren, in seeing the future ; this story is full of cowardice, failure, and desertion. Jesus could already see the gibbet from which Judas was to hang, the very Judas to whom He was giving Himself. He can already hear, too, the cry of denial of Peter, the prince of the Apostles, the one who would never deny Him. These are the sorrows which come to Him from His own, and they are the most lively and piercing.

He leads them to the Mount of Olives and there He abandons His heart in all the fulness of His love, abandoning it to every sorrow. He Who is strong is now beaten down, He Who moved so nobly in the

midst of us. He Who walked so loftily now begins to have fear ; He is seized with a heavy agony. Oh ! how I love to read these pages ! Thou wert tormented, Lord, by Thine agony, Thou wert abandoned to sorrow, Thou wert stricken down. These words of the Gospel have been my consolation in my sorrows. I must take them to heart, Lord, lest I should think of Thee as too great. I love to feel Thy sinking under this agony which is also mine. Thou art the man of sorrows, and in this moment of Thine agony Thy humanity is most manifest. Later Thou wilt have need of help ; Thou wilt call for someone to share Thy suffering, and Thou wilt find no one.

All you who are sad, join your sadness to His ; it is by this shrinking which His love feels that you live, and the peak of love is Calvary. Listen to this cry : " My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " Indeed, He was forsaken by all His own. He can see nothing but the crowd howling around Him ; He looks for those who could come to Him, for those on whom He had showered graces and miracles ; they have all forsaken Him. Those who are absent make Him suffer just as much as those who surround Him. Overwhelmed with sorrow He cries out, " My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " Such is the sorrow of the soul of Christ. It is so violent that to picture it to oneself would call for a soul as great as His. To understand the power which this sorrow had over Him it would be necessary to feel how great was His love for God and for His people. We shall never have a

sufficient appreciation of this love. When He gives His soul over to suffering, it seeks out every corner of Him that He may be filled with suffering ; and when He gives His whole body over, as the Prophet Isaias said, from the sole of His feet to the crown of His head, there is no part of Him left untouched. When Pilate shows Him to the people, it will not be so much a man he shows as a wound.

How He suffered, too, before the Sanhedrin ! He is questioned. He is insulted by menials ; the indecision of Pilate who wishes to save Him, only prolongs His martyrdom, and the agony of the Scourging, the Cross which weighs so heavily on the road to Calvary, all the sufferings which accompany Him to His Crucifixion, make Him cry out " I thirst." This terrible feeling of thirst is a sharp note in the midst of all the others. Thou showest us, my Saviour, the place which Thou gavest to suffering. Thou art the Man of Sorrows, and that we may not say " Lord, Thou hast not the eyes of the flesh," Thou hast said " I have eyes to see sorrow, I have a heart and a body to suffer, a head crowned with thorns." There indeed is the Man of Sorrows. He clothes Himself with our infirmity and replies with patience to the agony which pierces the bone, which penetrates to the very marrow. With patience He enters this terrible agony.

You heard Him, my Brethren, when He spoke to the daughters of Jerusalem : " Weep not for Me." He forgets Himself in seeing the sorrows of others. When we go further into the Passion we hear another

terribly significant phrase ; it is from His suffering that comes the cry of pardon : " Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." We, too, my Brethren, will suffer with patience, we will join our sorrows to His ; we will not act as though God could do nothing for us. We must not be afraid of being deceived by God ; we have only one thing to fear, lack of generosity towards Him. Consider our Saviour in the midst of His sufferings ; He replies to them by goodness. We will bear the sorrows of soul and body to the foot of the Cross ; there we must go, and there they will be transformed into goodness and courage. He will take our sufferings and sanctify them with His own. He will take them in His chalice to offer them to His Father. Come, then, to the Cross. There we shall find a resting-place.

Jesus prepares the souls of those He loves for His martyrdom with the most touching goodness ; so we salute the Cross again that our sorrows, mingled with those of Christ, may be changed to goodness.

O Crux, Ave !

He does not suffer only the sorrows caused by His own people and by His enemies. There is something more, something mysterious and austere, in His suffering as well.

It is not His Cross that makes Him suffer. Above the Cross there is another element, more profound, more mysterious, more terrible. He is not only the

Man of Sorrow, but He Who has made Himself sin. He has made Himself, for our sakes, the Man of Sin, and around Him there rages a fearful conflict between Heaven and Hell, between God and Satan. There is a similar struggle on this poor earth, too, the struggle with sin in which we are all involved. It began in the Garden of Gethsemani. The Fathers of the Church were not mistaken. No longer is it only the story of the Passion which is unfolded ; it was all the sins of the world which Christ bore upon His shoulders which made Him tremble before the chalice that was offered Him and push it aside with horror. He had a horror of sin, and He was faced with the sins of all ages, and of all souls. This was what nailed Him to the ground. When He saw before Him all sin, His human will started against that of His Father, but He immediately recovers : " Not as I will but as Thou wilt." For one moment He was in conflict with His Father, but He added " Thy will be done."

Such was the beginning of the Passion of Jesus. We shall never be able to penetrate it properly, but let us go a little further into the intimate, mysterious happenings in His soul. It is little to be the Man of Sorrows, but it is a great thing to be the Man of Sin. See, my Brethren, what sin made of Christ, and tell me then if you think that sin is a small matter. See Him struggling under the burden, see the features of divine justice and tell me if sin is a small matter. See the weight under which He groans and consider whether it comes from suffering alone.

The Jewish people were prophets when they cried out with one voice at the sight of Jesus become the Man of Sin, " Let His blood be on us and on our children." Indeed this blood has come down upon us, and shall fall again on the sins of Adam. Look at Him when Pilate shows Him to the crowd : " *Ecce Homo*," there He is, in the state to which blows had reduced Him, there is man as sin has made Him ; all these words have but one meaning ; then again, when they cry out, " Let Him now descend from the Cross . . . He has saved others and He cannot save Himself " —Lord, Thou couldst not save Thyself because Thou wishedst to save others ; then again, " *Tolle, tolle, crucifige eum* " . . . " Hail, King of the Jews ! "— it is the cry of the crowd which crowns Him King. Another crowd had wished to exalt Thee and make Thee King after all Thy benefactions, after the multiplications of the loaves. And now, Lord, they place a crown upon Thy head and have put a robe of purple upon Thee. How mysterious are these words. We feel that there is some infernal struggle, a cruelty worthy of Satan. Ah, could we but penetrate this mystery.

We hear the cry, " My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " It is no longer His Father but His God. He is as far from God as we are by reason of our faults. He is isolated in His being. When we read in the Passion that the crowd wished to pardon Barabbas and that Christ was condemned, all this story shows us that there is something mysterious here. We do not experience only sympathy for a being in suffering,

but a feeling of admiration too. Christ has made Himself man for us. We must hail Him, too, as our Redeemer. If He has shed tears, they are not just mere tears, but such tears as sin would cause to be shed.

We have some place in this drama, my Brethren. It is our fight that is being fought ; the victim is our victim ; the sufferings are our sins. When you come to the feet of Christ suffering at Gethsemani, you do not come only to answer an appeal ; you come, too, to mix your sorrows with His. Look at Him ; He is stretched out under the burden of our faults. We will approach Him and say to Him, " Lord, what Thou sufferest, we have merited " ; and He will answer by sending us His grace, which will come and awaken our souls, giving them fresh and vigorous youth.

There is close to Thee, Lord, a soul pierced with sorrows. Thou hast wished it, O my God, Thou hast granted it to hear a word of greeting, springing from thine agony. Thou wert sorrowful even unto death, and yet Thou speakest a word of joy to me. How good it is to feel that we are loved so much as that. Jesus puts Himself in our place, my Brethren. We must not consider that He has suffered for others besides ourselves, nor must we feel that His sufferings were long ago. No, this is something living ; it is all the graces which we have received ; and whenever we have been regenerated—so often, alas—it has been in the blood of Jesus that we have been washed.

Christ comes out of the house of Caiphas. Think of

the look which He gave Peter, Peter who loves Him. There again He suffers. It is not only death, it is the fault of Peter, too, measured in the light of His penetrating look. O happy look, and happy tears. Lord, I would wish that this look should fall upon me, that it should penetrate right to the depths of my poor being : *Respexit Petrum.*

This is how we should place ourselves at the foot of the Cross. All the souls that are dear to Him come to the Cross to learn to suffer ; it is there we must beat our breasts.

At the foot of the Cross we see St Mary Magdalen. Already she had poured perfume over His feet. It was a precious perfume ; to some it seemed too precious, too rich. But how she is rewarded now. With this precious perfume she poured forth her tears also. Her repentance made of it a fragrant perfume, and she wiped it away with her hair. Now you see that it is the blood of Christ which falls upon her and inundates her. That, Lord, is what souls ask of Your Cross, the blood which redeems.

Veronica, too, is there, who offered her veil to take the image of the face of Christ. His Mother is there. Sin had no rights over her, but she is there that she may become greater still in horror of sin and yet in love of the sinner. She is as a priest at the altar ; it is the hand of God which triumphs over sorrow ; and in her steps will tread a great army of Virgins.

How beautiful is the face of Jesus. But look, O my God, upon those souls, too, at the foot of the Cross,

who did not wish to desert Him. They have come to the summit of Calvary and wish to unite themselves to the fruitfulness of His sufferings. By the virtue of His intercession and by His love of us, they have strength to resist sin. Thou hast given birth in them to a vocation.

Calvary is also the place of all those who have sinned. They cannot pass before the Cross without feeling the weight of sin and without beating their breasts, without feeling the weight of the blood of Christ. They are not innocent of this blood ; they have received it whether for their salvation or for their damnation. In the shadow of the Cross where the justice of God strikes so pitilessly, may a flood of graces pour over you, my Brethren, and transform you.

O Crux, Ave.

At the foot of the Cross there is also death. It was with difficulty that death approached, for it had no claim on Him. Yet He lets death touch Him, and after the last words cried out from the Cross, death places his hand on Him. With a cry, Jesus dies.

Yet, Lord, Thou didst speak once again. " *Consummatum est.*" All is consummated, all is achieved ; Thou hast but to look back upon Thy life. Yes, everything is consummated ; this work was undertaken through love, and everywhere in it I see Thy great love. O my God, it pleased Thee to give Thyself to us, and now everything is consummated, Thy life at Nazareth,

Thy thirty years of work inspired by love, presented by a heart which is always living ; Thy three years of public life are completed. Everything is finished, and Thou mayest well say " What could I have done that I have not done ? "

But what is my poor life in contrast with Thine ? I am afraid of death ; if to-day were my last day could I say " Everything is consummated ? " No, nothing is finished ; my life is but a series of sacrifices begun but never finished. My poor life, full of fragments, full of beginnings, is nothing before the plenitude of Yours.

Yet something remains to give me once more assurance, something which sheds joy and hope over my life. By Thy side there was another man crucified ; his cross represents my death-bed. He saw his poor life, the crimes which stained and obscured it ; he could cry out but once ; what merit could this cry have ? Death is upon him, and he will not have time to repair his faults. He has but one minute. Yet what centuries this one word was worth. It is directed to the Cross of Jesus ; he has but one thing to say. " This man suffers unjustly ; we have deserved what we suffer." That is the cry of the good thief : " What I suffer I have deserved." Strengthened by this confession he dares to cast his eyes upon Him Who suffers. " Lord, remember me." He does not dare to ask for a place of honour ; he asks just for pity, just for a look, just for something which will not damn him eternally.

So long as the Cross shall stand, so long as the

sacrifice shall endure, so long as the blood shall flow, for so long is it to be the hour of mercy. Lord, Thou saidest to him, "This day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise." Sufferings that are accepted do not wait long for their reward; his sufferings are united to those of Jesus and open Paradise for him.

"This very day, with Me." Such were the words of Jesus, such the hope that comes from the Cross; this is the word that will give me room to hope in my last hour; my sorrows shall be heard; united to those of Jesus they shall be crowned. That is Paradise. There are the prophets, the Saints, and just men of the Old Testament. There is the soul which goes to Heaven borne by the soul of Jesus. There is the hope which comes from the Cross of Jesus. Oh, my Brethren, if the soul can still give forth a cry that will repair its faults, then it matters not that its life has been evil or full of omissions. Let Jesus help it. He asks but that; to work in you, to fulfil His work of your salvation; His is the hand that opens Paradise to us.

Pater, in manus tuas commendo spiritum meum. My Father, I place my soul in Thy hands; that is to say, I give Thee the greatest and noblest thing in the world, the soul which has always lived for Thee, which has always been Thine. This soul has sought for nothing of this world's, wherefore it cried out *Sitio.* The world has not changed me. Blessed are those who die as Jesus did, thirsting. The world is made so that it may make us desire something else. Grant, Lord, that at the hour of my death I may feel Thy mercy,

and find myself in shelter. I thirst for the greatest of all things ; that is the cry which we can raise with the cry of Jesus. His soul breathed only Heaven. Following this soul I can give Him my own too, this small, unworthy soul of mine, pleasure-loving, feeble, full of infirmities, which discourages me and disgusts me, my poor soul which makes me suffer, which is something quite inexplicable in its mystery. I will say these words after Thee, Lord, and by Thy death my death, too, will be blessed. I place my soul at the foot of the Cross, that bed of sorrows, I place it in Thy hands with Thy own beautiful, simple, pure, and great Soul. The death of a Christian, my Brethren, supported by Christ, is very sweet. A sweet light of hope comes out of sadness, and if I wish, this hope can be mine.

Let it be not only mine, Lord, but let it come to all I love, to all those whom Thou hast given me to love. Now let the shadows descend, for Thou hast left no one without forgiveness ; we shall be received with Thee ; death is swallowed up in the death of Christ ; we shall come to the foot of Thy Cross to learn to die ; and this hope alone will still illumine our last moments.

VI

THE PRAYER OF JESUS ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES THE MODEL OF OUR PRAYER

PRAYER is a sacerdotal act. The Divine Master prays with us not only that He may give us an example, not only as our tutor to mould us towards our duty, but because He is above all the Priest. St John and St Paul show Him praying for us. They say that this duty is laid upon Him in virtue of His title of Priest, that He fulfilled it from His birth to His death, and that if He is always living, it is that He may continue to pray for us as our eternal Priest.

For souls who are not entirely given to God, prayer is an action to which a certain part of the day is devoted ; it is a few moments' truce with the world in order to think of God, of one's soul, of the duties of one's state. But it is very often an act that is made with coldness, fulfilled by habit without the heart's speaking in a living way. But for the truly Christian soul, for the soul of the Saint, prayer is a very different matter. It is a longing, a necessity. Yet it is often a burden, too, a cross, a cross as weighty as the love which inspires it. Prayer exhausts the soul of the

Saint, annihilates it before all the creatures in the name of which it should proclaim the glory of the Creator.

It is of prayer so considered, the prayer of souls who wish to be Saints, that we are going to speak. Our Lord prayed that He might offer the feelings of His heart as a complement to ours. Nothing is so vast as prayer. It is an *annihilation* of being before God. It is an impulse of the soul towards God to *implore* Him, a blessing of His Name to *give Him thanks* for what one has received. Finally, it is an act of love and consequently a sacrifice.

Prayer is an *act of annihilation*. Listen : When you begin to pray, you feel that the activity of your soul is like an unique force which springs towards God. This is the case not only in your morning and night prayers, not only at the sacrifice of the altar, but whenever any violent emotion agitates your soul you feel this longing impulse towards God. But immediately there follows a prostration of the soul, a sort of dejection. The superabundant impulse towards God is succeeded by a profound feeling of impotent sorrow. Why ? The soul has called God. God has come to it, and faced by God the soul cries out, " Lord, my substance is nothing before Thee." The soul has felt the foundation of its being, and if it has considered even a little its faults and the terrible inclinations which urge it towards the worst negation of being, sin, it cannot but annihilate itself. There is accordingly a double movement in the soul, of dilation and of exceedingly painful contraction. The soul cries out, " God exists since

He has made me," but adds immediately, " I am nothing, I have no being compared with Him Who *is*."

This movement occurs in all prayer that calls God to us. No man will ever see God and continue to live his own self-centred life. No man could believe that he was anything if God had shown Himself to him.

Our Lord, too, prayed in annihilation. At first in the annihilation to which He reduced Himself in order to be a little infant at Mary's breast, where He offers Himself as though on His first altar. His hidden life, again, is an annihilation, a prayer of all His being in face of God of Whom He is the revelation and the glory. On the Cross He is completely prayer, substantial and living prayer. He fulfils this prayer in us by complete annihilation when He descends into our souls in the form of bread, when He prays with the soul, that the soul may pray in Him and He in the soul.

Prayer is an *act of asking*. For the Christian soul it is not confined to asking for one's own self. The Psalmist, picturing to us the universal need of God, shows us the flowers of the fields which incline their corollas towards the earth which is their grave that they may seek the dew they want, the young of animals which ask their food of God Who nourishes them. That prayer is common to all creatures ; but it must not, nevertheless, be the only prayer for mankind. Yet how few there are who, in the spirit of union with Christ, ask for His glory and the salvation of souls ; how few picture to themselves the multiple needs of

souls, or God in His majesty Who needs to be honoured.

Our Lord saw this unhappy insufficiency and said "Ecce venio." His great heart made itself into prayer, a greater and more complete prayer than our own, because in His infinite understanding He makes His petitions to correspond with our needs. In His signal goodness He takes certain souls with Him—the souls which He led to Thabor—He leads them to the Mount of Olives and says to them, "Pray with Me; I will suffice for your weakness; I place My heart against yours; ask and desire what My heart asks and desires, and My prayer will become yours to raise it up, to give it nobility and grandeur, to make it supernatural and divine." When the soul asks for what the will of Jesus desires there is something singularly affecting which occurs. Jesus is at hand to remedy its coldness, even to remedy its poverty which is so unhappy, because it does not even feel what it lacks and knows not how to express its needs.

Prayer is a *giving of thanks*, an act of gratitude to God Who humbled Himself to our own level by His gifts. He has given us His grace, and the soul tries to answer Him by a hymn of praises. Noble and elevated souls know that gratitude is a burden under which they succumb for lack of means of expression for their feelings. They have more longings than resources, and the Saints, accordingly, overcome by the divine goodness, have felt their gratitude weigh like a cross upon their souls. "There is but one praise which

befits Me," says the Saviour, " and that is the praise of the silence of the soul, crushed to nothingness." But here it is that the heart of Jesus is at hand, and then a fitting praise is offered to God. Jesus wishes to be called the *Eucharist*, the eternal praise offered to God, raised up to Him to supplement the poverty of our hearts.

Prayer is an *act of love*. This is what makes it at once so sweet and yet so sad. In some souls love is restless, it is a passion in which there is a double current of vivid longing and, at the same time, of strange and profound sorrow. Love tends towards the infinite and consumes all the life of the soul. It was with such a love that Jesus was troubled. Whence comes this sweat of blood, this sorrow which fills Him with bitterness ? It comes from the boundless love which leads Him towards God, which brings Him to us, and fills Him with sorrow. His love is here to make up our coldness and insufficiency, to supplement what we cannot ourselves give. For the Saints who were given over to love, prayer was a time of exhaustion in which they shed tears so sorrowful that they were indeed tears of blood. Jesus took them with Him and gave them some share in the feelings of His own heart. We will pray to Him for a little of this sorrow which is produced by the sight of an outraged God or of souls who are being lost. We will pray to Him that we may feel some of this racking pain, and that we may have some share in this passion of His heart for the glory of God and the salvation of souls.

The prayer of Our Lord in the Garden of Olives is full of lessons for us. He goes to pray in the hour of His sadness ; the hour that is for us the difficult hour in which we often pray the less. The reason lies in the nature of our sorrow, which comes from our *proprietary* spirit, from a disillusion, from a deception, because something which we loved has failed us. It is a sorrow of irritation which closes us in on ourselves. The reason why it brings us nothing but bitterness, and fails to raise us towards God, is that it is not in any way prayerful.

There is another sorrow which is better, the sorrow of a soul which has made many efforts to raise itself and has fallen back to the ground, of a soul which has often tried and seldom succeeded. The soul that then continues to pray has great merit. It is for this that Jesus has wished to take the soul with Him. " When you are sad," He said, " instead of being baffled and beaten, come with Me, do not stay asleep as the Apostles did, but wait a little, have patience and watch in prayer with Me."

In times of sorrow we are often discouraged. Jesus wished to give us an example of prayer which is not discouraged. " Going into His agony, He prayed constantly."

There is another consoling aspect of the prayer in the Garden of Olives, and this is the struggle which took place in the heart of Jesus. A soul has perhaps said to itself " My ideal would be to be without any struggle, to tend in one direction peacefully and

completely, to have wings, and without this my prayer is worth nothing." Undeceive yourselves. Come and look at the mysterious struggle which rages in the depths of the Divine Heart. There is something in Jesus which accepts and wills the sorrow, and something which rejects it. He abandoned Himself to these contradictory impulses that He might console me in the hour when I am sorrowful and divided.

The essence of prayer is the acceptation of what God imposes on the soul. " My God, take this chalice from Me "—in that lay the struggle. " Thy will be done " —therein was the victory. At first I spoke with the apprehension of a troubled and trembling soul. But I will end by the second aspiration, and if I say it sincerely, however racking the struggle may be, the prayer is good.

In the distress of His prayer Jesus wished to have the help of an angel, of a being infinitely less than Himself. We, too, have need of souls to sustain us, even of souls feebler than our own ; we need their prayers to keep us in the humility which accepts all human aid as coming from God.

Such are the profound lessons which we find in this mystery.

If you wish to know the cause of this strange sorrow, of these drops of blood, look for it in the soul of Jesus, and say to Him, " Lord, why this faltering which astounds and terrifies me, why this sorrow which I could not have imagined or believed ? " He will answer you, " Because I have loved your soul, because

I have loved it to excess, loved it with passion, and because your soul has not loved Me."

Let us look no further. Jesus alone can reveal this mystery to us and teach us to apply it to our own hearts, Jesus Who so loved us that He redeemed us by His sufferings, that He associates us with Him in His mission and allows us to work with Him. What a sweet and consoling mystery.

VII

THE CROWN OF THORNS

TO-DAY the Church presents the Crown of Thorns for the consideration of our souls. The words which begin the Mass and which are repeated throughout all the Office of the day, those touching words are well known to you. " Come out, ye daughters of Sion, and see King Solomon in the diadem which his mother has prepared for him." Come and see your King Solomon, not the Sage, but the insensate King, Him Who has loved you even to madness, not in His strength, but in His weakness, the weakness of love which is the greatest strength ; not your King surrounded with glory, but clothed for you in ignominy ; come and see Him under the crown which His mother the Synagogue has made for Him. It is not the crown of honour with which you crown Him yourselves, but the crown under which He will rule over your souls, the crown which He has borne for you ; come and see Him in the day of His Espousals, on the day when He draws souls to Himself, when He weds them in sorrow, when He unites Himself to them by His cruel suffering. These are the words, taken from the Canticle of Canticles, with which the

Church sets before us the sight of the Crown of Thorns.

Go back to the day of the first curse. The accursed earth shall bear nothing but thorns. It is true ; every day we hear you say " Thorns, the earth bears nothing but thorns for me ; I find them everywhere, in the things which should spare me suffering, and which turn into the sharpest thorns, in those who should be my solace, my help, and my joy. The most painful thorns come from the hearts of those around me, from the heart which my heart loves, on whom I have spent the best of my life, and from whom I might have expected everything." So you speak daily ; this accursed land is covered with thorns, they grow everywhere, they wound everyone.

Mental thorns are the most painful of all. They attack us just where our thoughts are elaborated. They prevent the mind from thinking, they stir up in it a multitude of sharp anxieties, of painful preoccupations, of sorrowful presentiments. We lose the thought of God, we no longer know where we are, we have no thought of Heaven, no ideas come to the mind save those which weaken it, divide it, turn it against itself, which prevent it from seeing things except through a haze of gloomy anxiety. What happens to the head under all these thorns ?

Jesus has gathered them, He has gathered the thorns which make us suffer, the thorns which this accursed world bears for us. He has collected them with love, He has not let a single one go by without plucking it.

He has preciously put them together, and, placing them on His divine head, on His sacred brow, He has woven of them a crown. I salute this crown under which Jesus has felt the trials of the life which distresses me. I salute it with love, because Jesus has placed the thorns from which I suffer, and which have rent me to the heart, in the place of honour.

It was to seek these thorns that our Lord came to the earth. He found them first in the house at Bethlehem, and then gathered them throughout His whole life. He found them in greatest abundance on the road to Calvary when He sought after the lost sheep, and there He found His head bound round with thorns, He, the Paschal Lamb.

Such is the meaning of the thorns which crown the head of Jesus. They tell us where He has been to look for us, where we were when He found us, and at what a price He saved us.

The Synagogue crowned our Lord with them. The land of Israel bore more thorns than the rest of the world; this blessed land, watered with the divine blood, evangelised with love, bore nothing but thorns, and crowned the Saviour with them. Is not that a thought to awaken your love? You have yourself crowned with thorns Him Who came to help you in your troubles and anxieties, Him Who came to ennoble and supernaturalise your woes and sorrows. It is indeed a look full of compunction that you should turn towards Him. When Pilate presents the Man crowned with thorns to the view of all, which amongst us

can say that he has not driven in one of those thorns ?

Had St Peter seen His Master then Whom he denied, he would have measured the thorns, and he would have said that the sharpest one which caused most blood to flow, which pierced its way right to the eyes which had a moment before been fixed on him with such love, that this was the thorn which he had just driven in. That is our first thought before this crown.

Another thought arises from this picture. *Respice faciem Christi tui* : " Behold the face of your Christ." We must not consider the teachings of the Saviour only by themselves when they strike us by their beauty, by their secret harmony with the generous aspirations and profound needs of the soul ; they take on a different and more touching aspect, a greater imperiousness and urgency, when we consider them coming from the mouth of Him Who utters them.

During Lent the Church has wished us to enter more and more into this spirit. The Mass of each day has its own Gospel which shows us an example, a doctrine which is more and more urgent for our souls. The Church wishes to bring into it the picture of the Passion of Jesus. Thus, on the first Friday, she shows us the divine face crowned with thorns. Then she will show us His heart pierced by the lance, His feet and hands pierced by the nails. This is the picture of Jesus which the Church brings before us successively under different aspects during Lent, when she recapitulates her teachings, in order that two things may be in-

extricably interwoven, Jesus suffering and giving us a lesson in the name of His sufferings, imposing them in the name of His love. " Behold the face of your Christ crowned with thorns."

In to-day's Gospel He asks you to be perfect as your Heavenly Father is perfect. It is thus not a matter of generosity but of strict duty to forgive even those who misunderstand you and calumniate you. This is lofty teaching. " Durus est hic sermo " ; it is difficult for that heart to understand in which some stiffness and inflexibility has entered by reason of some real or pretended injury. *Respice faciem Christi tui.* Behold the face of Jesus under the thorns with which He is crowned, under the veil which the holy woman offers Him, and on which He impresses His blessed face. Then you will understand the tenor of His teaching and the necessity to put it into practice. All its value and urgency arise from its coming from the lips of Jesus, from the mouth of the Man of Sorrows.

Such is the thought which the Church wishes to develop during Lent. She recommends us to study the divine teachings, and above all, to apply them to ourselves. It is not a matter of finding ideas. Pious persons often are to blame for searching for some new idea, for wishing to consider some novel aspect. Ideas are not multiplied as one advances in the Christian life. On the contrary, there are only two or three—or even less—but they become more profound, they go right down into the divisions of the soul, they are applied in greater and greater detail. The theory is

nothing; we must seize the opportunity of applying it.

Take up, then, this word of God which has fallen into the midst of the thorns of so many souls in which it cannot grow. Take it up from the mouth of Him Who has suffered so much. Thence, above all, comes its eloquence, and then we may say "*Egredimini.*" Come forth, daughters of Sion, dear souls, a little curious, who perhaps wish too much to be moved; you wish to find an idea which will touch the chords of your sensibility but which will not pierce to the bottom, which is not a fundamental idea; dear souls who come to the word of God as to a spectacle, to something which affects the sight and does not descend into the heart: *Egredimini*, come forth that you may to-day go further, come and see your King. It is He Who taught Solomon his wisdom, Who gives His blood at the same time as His word, Who writes with His flowing blood the word which has the virtue of this blood; come and see the Sage of sages Who writes not on His throne, but under His crown of thorns, with His hands nailed; what He has written is indeed written, "Quod scripsi scripsi," and should be engraved on your hearts. Come and see Solomon in the day of his glory, wearing the crown with which his mother adorned him on the day of his betrothal; for if this language does not speak to you to-day, if this teaching does not reach you through the medium of His sorrows, when will it ever reach you? When will you grasp it? If it does not go down into your hearts,

if it does not penetrate you with love in the name of such great love, when will it make its way into the very marrow of your bones ? Come forth now to see Him, to hear Him, that He may engrave deep in your hearts the teaching which He writes in the fulness of His sorrow.

Such is the thought of the Church, to have the vision of Jesus suffering and dying for us, and to comment in this way upon His teachings. If anything taken by itself seems to you to be beyond your strength, yet if you look at Jesus everything is possible and becomes sweet. " Come forth, daughters of Sion."

In the love of Jesus compassion should go further than a passing feeling of pity. Sorrow should have something deeper, it should penetrate right into the soul. It would be nothing, nothing at all, if it stopped short at a mild sensibility, effective for a moment. It must translate itself into action, it must definitely love sorrow and bear the crown of thorns with those who suffer. When we have suffered with Him we know what it is to have pity for others ; true charity, true Christliness is in the knowledge of how to suffer with Our Lord.

St Catherine of Siena understood this very well. Our Lord offered her two crowns, one of roses and the other of thorns, and she eagerly seized the thorns because she chose not Solomon in his glory, but Solomon in His ignominy, not Solomon in his delight and pleasure, but Solomon in His sorrows. She understood that He is the King of those who suffer, the

Spouse of the souls called to suffering ; that sacrifice should not only be accepted but clasped to the heart, that it is not enough only to take the thorn, but that we must press it against our breast and force it in as the Divine Spouse forced it into His adorable head. Divine life will make its way in with the cruel thorn ; it will enter into the soul and mingle the blood of our own heart with the divine blood.

It is in this that union with Jesus consists ; the union of which mention was made in the passage on which we are commenting. Jesus contracts this union only with a soul which accepts suffering, which loves it, which prefers it to everything else because it unites it more closely to Him.

Our Lord has gathered all the thorns, He has taken them all. Alas, we have often sown thorns for Him . . . and the look which we should turn towards Him is a look of compunction. You will then understand better His word and His teachings. Nothing will seem difficult from the mouth of Him Who has suffered so much. And you will see that therein lies the only way of union that He has left a soul of any generosity which wishes to be united to Him.

Like the daughters of Sion, those good and sympathetic souls who met Him on the road as He was weighted down with the burden of His Cross, you wish to follow, too, in your own way of the Cross. You see the conditions on which He allows you to follow. You wish for union, you must not reject the means ; you wish for humility, you must not reject humiliation.

In sacrifice one must consider the hand which offers it. If you study your life in the light of Our Lord you will see that you err by attaching importance to things and persons. There is a secret design of God which has never allowed you to find happiness where you sought for it. There is a sort of deliberate happening which makes you find bitterness just where you expect consolation. You have plucked a thorn instead of a rose. But God would not have you be as the child who sees only the secondary cause and cannot recognise the hand which is full of love even when it is severe.

If you can see that Jesus acts in this way because He loves, you will not exclude sorrow from your life—it will be more penetrating, for there are no deeper sorrows than pure sorrows—but you will take from your sorrow all the bitterness, all the agitation and impetuosity which is introduced into it by self-love. The day of suffering is the day of espousal. Those souls who have already arrived there understand this ; on those days they have been more intimate with Jesus ; He has been more profoundly united to them ; as on Calvary He united Himself to the most Blessed Virgin in the perfection of His heart, to St John in the perfection of His love, to St Mary Magdalen in the perfection of her repentance.

Jesus is the Spouse of souls who consider Him in His Passion that they may bring Him deeper into their hearts by their adhesion to His will, by a better understanding of His teaching, by suffering. If the soul has entered the least distance into this union, it will

embrace suffering with joy ; it will be perhaps a thorn in the head, a terrible pain, but underneath the soul will feel a deep peace and the calm of quiet adhesion. It will have few ideas, it will perhaps be impossible for it to put two ideas together, but its will will have but one cry, " To suffer, to be with Jesus." These souls, the daughters of Sion who have come forth to see their King, may truly say " This is indeed the day on which His mother has crowned Him with sorrows, this is the day on which I have become His spouse, on which I have felt what He was for me, on which He has shown Himself to me as my King, as the Spouse of my soul, and its true life."

VIII

"COME TO ME, ALL YE WHO SUFFER"

MY Brethren, Our Lord is on the Cross. He is set up there as the King of all human sorrows, and this is the great day of His royalty. "Come to Me, all ye who suffer." From the Cross it is that He reigns; there it is that He is the lover Who draws all to Him.

Whether we will it or not, we, too, have our cross. Simon of Cyrene was called to carry the Cross, and we, too, are called to carry our cross. . . . How I wish, my Brethren, that these crosses of ours were planted in the shadow of that of the Divine Master, in that beneficent and ennobling shadow of His sorrows. May this shadow bring down a sort of pacification of our sorrows! And it is indeed the will of the Divine Master that all our sorrows should be placed under the shelter of His Cross. He has stretched out His hands over all those who suffer so greatly in their bodies . . . He takes them to Him perhaps a little roughly; He takes some part or other of your person and stretches it on the Cross. Physical pain is so terrible because it hardly leaves the spirit the freedom to offer its suffering; but there is this consolation at least, that if it is

God Who has chosen it for us our task is proportioned to our measure, and this may reassure us in spite of ourselves. Let us, then, offer up to Him this immobility which so distresses our spirit ; to do this is to plant our cross in the shade of that of the Divine Master.

Let those who are sad come too : perhaps they say to themselves when they are faced by sadness, " What is man ? What is the human being ? If I suffer, to whom can it be of any moment ? " Banish this thought from your minds. Ask St John what he saw, and he will show you what he saw and noted down in his Gospel ; he will tell you that Our Lord has a heart from which He has shed the last drop of blood for all mankind. Jesus does not say " These men are ungrateful "—such is too often the reflection that we make. Rather He says " Come and see the lengths to which the goodness of Christ has gone " ; He has gone so far as even to shed the last drops of His blood. Let the despairing come also. Earth holds no more for them and the dew of Heaven falls on them no longer ; let them come and see the abandonment of Christ, let them hear His cry, " My Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " There are souls who honour this state of Christ in His abandonment ; they enter into this suffering, into this abandonment which is our support but whence no heavenly dew falls upon us. You, too, who think that you are for ever lost because you see the succession of your faults and tepidities, you who say, " As well might one draw water from a stone

as good from my poor soul," do you, too, listen to this cry, " My Father, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " and reply, " It is for me, that I may never be forsaken." Such is the lesson which we must seek in the inexhaustible goodness of Christ.

There are times when we are dazed with sorrow. When we have lost someone who is dear to us we can see nothing but our loss. Our eyes cannot remove themselves from the open tomb ; we are, as it were, hypnotised and say to ourselves, " In this world in which everything is so soon forgotten, He at least shall not be forgotten." Rather would we forget the living, for it is the best, we say, that are gone. Come to the foot of the Cross, you who suffer with this sorrow, and listen to the words which Jesus spoke to His Mother as He died : " Behold your Son." Your son ! no, the comparison is too painful . . . consider your son with his arms stretched out on this Cross, and let your love reach out over those who are unworthy of it, over those who remind you so little of your son. This is the way to cure the stupor of grief. We throw it off by means of that activity which does not take us further from those who are gone but binds us closer to those who remain. The living are not a consolation to us—far from it, perhaps—but which is better, to give or to receive ?

There are also those whose sources of relief seem to have dried up, and the world can give them nothing ; their roots seem somehow to be withered. Let them come and hear the word, *Sitio :* how good it is to

thirst for God ! Happy are the souls who hunger and thirst after justice ; happy are those who long for the coming of Thy kingdom. Let those souls come to the foot of the Cross whose thirst this world can never quench. Happy the souls who desire something so great ! They may perhaps be deceived sometimes, perhaps they may sometimes be misled, God may have appeared to them under an aspect which was not quite orthodox ; but at the hour of their death they will gaze in admiration on Him Who shows Himself to them, and they will say " Lord, what I did not recognise was Thine image which I saw through those who said that they were Thy devotees ; but now I recognise Thee."

Let those come who have sinned. Of these there are many ; let them ask Magdalen for the sweetness and goodness of weeping for their sins under the forgiveness of Christ. Magdalen had seen the grossness of her sins, but how much more gross they seemed to her in the light of this goodness, at the foot of the Cross, when she sees the extent to which she has been loved. There in truth she breaks the vase of her heart, at the foot of that other vase which breaks itself and pours upon her a most precious perfume. Her contrition becomes more perfect, it becomes *compunction ;* her sorrow is something more vital ; she is drowned in it.

Let the Cross of Christ cast its shadow, too, over that of the good thief, over those who die. Those who are not afraid of death at this moment will fear it at their

last hour. How terrible are the last agonies of the spirit and of the heart! But our death, too, is close to the Cross, and so death is no longer an abyss, or, if it is, it is an abyss of mercy and goodness. "Into Thy hands I commend my soul." Ah, my poor soul, how gladly it hides and shelters itself in Thine, where it sees no more, where it loses itself. At the end of this day which seems almost interminable, I shall be with Thee in Paradise.

So it is that human sorrows are transformed at the foot of the Cross of Christ; so is He truly the King of all sorrows.

Christ has not lessened grief—that I do not believe. You know that when one is engaged in education and examines all the feelings of a child's mind, and sees a young soul eager for great things, one says that here is a soul which will feel sorrow, which will know the most exquisite grief. So, as Christ made for Himself the greatest of souls and the one most capable of great things, He made Himself thereby more peculiarly sensitive to sorrow. Christ has not, then, abolished sorrow, He has not even lessened it; but He has made the heart capable of suffering, He has transformed sorrow. The victory of Christ on the Cross consists in that He has not allowed sorrow to have the last word. The Cross has not made suffering lighter, but it is the bond of unity between Heaven and earth; on it is stretched the peace which God came to bring to men.

In ancient times sorrow was already a matter that

exercised the minds of men. Sometimes life comes to a peaceful end. We watch the aged Œdipus, who goes down to the sea and dies calmly, but now we have something better than that. Consider the sick man who has accepted his sufferings and made an offering of them ; perhaps he has tried to smile, though the smile refuses to come to his lips ; yet something divine has been instilled into his suffering. It will end in a feeling of peace.

Consider the sorrow of sins that we recognise, upon which follows humiliation and irritation. When humility has been joined to it, when humiliation has been turned by it into humility, the soul cries out " Lord, I see by this hidden work which goes on in me that I am remaking the work of Thy hands, but I will become more and more the work of Thy hands as I heap upon myself Thy mercies."

And the final word of sorrow is goodness. We must not seek the consolation of sorrow that we may disparage mankind. Perhaps we have tried to do some good and have met only with ingratitude, but we must not consider this. We cannot love mankind without seeing some beauty in it and wishing it to be still more beautiful. A sort of sweetness succeeds to the desire for revenge, which is a kind of incitement to goodness springing from the injury done to us.

We may be saddened by sin, but this sadness becomes sweet, and we take pleasure in weeping for our sins. There is not a single Psalm of David which does not begin with sorrow and end with joy. This is

so with the *Miserere* which you have just been singing —who will wash away, who will wipe out this stain ? This sin will always be before my eyes, I will never be able to get away from the sight of it ; and then you whisper I know not what word in the ear of my heart and I tremble to the depths of my being, as the bones of Ezechiel were moved ; I will tell others the joy of weeping for one's sins, and tell them how love adds this joy to repentance. So, as the poet says, we smile amidst our tears. So, even in contrition, sorrow has not the last word.

We feel that the last word of death, too, is not one of grief. Nothing is more anti-Christian than grief. When a man says that Christ is dead but that He has taken nothing from the horror of death, that He has but shared the common fate and has not in any way changed it, he utters the most terrible blasphemy. I can understand even a soul which says at the hour of death, " Oh, what if there is nothing at the end ? " But, my Brethren, if Christ died it was that He might receive us in His arms that we might never die. This new hope gives us fresh confidence, and so it is that even from sorrow proceeds the guarantee of peace.

IX

"STABAT MATER DOLOROSA"

HERE we are, my Brethren, at the summit of Calvary, at the foot of the Cross. Let us try to recollect ourselves there for a few moments, for it is good for us to stay here.

At the foot of this Cross on which is stretched the most lovable of beings Who is dying for mankind, we find the most lovable of creatures. "Stabat Mater." She stood there, who loved the most, who had been made with the greatest capacity for love. "Ave gratia plena." Grace—she has been filled with grace, and to-day all her love has been filled with an immense sorrow. She suffers as much as she has loved. She would not wish to suffer less, for this would be to love less; there she is, gathering up this sorrow in her heart, swollen by grief beyond measure.

A woman in the Gospel, when one day she heard the teaching of Christ, cried out "Blessed is the mother who bore You." She might well add to-day, "Unhappy the mother who sees the Passion of her Divine Son." His Passion is felt again in the depths of His mother's heart; there she feels it, there she lives it. It is this that we recognise when we speak of

the compassion of the Most Blessed Virgin. This word " compassion," which means " to feel with," is the passion of which she has suffered all the blows and torments ; it is the union which makes her experience again all that the heart of the Divine Master felt ; everything rebounds upon her in a mysterious and incomprehensible way of which it is very difficult to speak. We hardly dare to speak of love and sorrow in connection with the Divine Master and His mother, for it seems to insult their feelings and to belittle them.

We can sometimes picture to ourselves certain sorrows which do not reach the summit of the soul, which leave untouched what we might call the fine edge of the soul, but which are present to all that happens in the lower parts of the soul. Such was not her sorrow. Sorrow diminishes that part of the soul by which we make our offering to God, sometimes to such an extent that we are only just able to make the offering at all ; it is very difficult to be sure that we will not be impatient.

And this is the meaning of what St Bernard says. " The Soul is not where she lives, but where she loves " ; and St Bernardine of Siena cried : " Oh, St John, do not say that the Most Blessed Virgin was at the foot of the Cross ; say rather that she was on the Cross."

The Blessed Virgin had the enormous grief of seeing the suffering of a Being, Who was everything to her, Who was not only her Son but her God. You know

what a grief it is to be with one whom you love when he is suffering, and to be unable to do anything. " You wish to do everything and you can do nothing." That is indeed terrible. You cannot even rest his head or give him the least alleviation. To have to say to yourself that your very presence only makes him suffer more ! The glance of Jesus, which reads in the Scriptures that He may achieve every iota of them, reads in the depths of the heart of His mother in a manner that we cannot describe. Not only does she see Him suffer, but she makes Him suffer by being there ; she is an additional suffering for Him, and she feels this piercingly. When the Divine Master has been pleased to communicate to certain of His Saints the sufferings which He felt Himself, He wrote upon them, as it were, by means of the stigmata. In order to alleviate the intense suffering which He imposed upon their souls, He granted them physical pain as a relief ; the pains of hands and feet were as a relief which solaced the soul in its sorrow. It was not so for the Most Blessed Virgin ; she does not suffer in her body ; such solace is forbidden her. In vain she offers her hands, her whole weak person, only her heart is stricken. This is one of the sorrows of the Blessed Virgin, one which cannot be fathomed. The agony of Christ has something terrible in it ; the feeling of the nature of sin has entered into His soul.

At the foot of the Cross Magdalen sees her sins ; she is flooded by the goodness of Christ. The Blessed Virgin sees the sin of others ; certain Saints have seen

it and have been astonished that they were not annihilated by this vision of sin, and by the vision of the awful justice of God.

The Most Blessed Virgin is on Calvary that the Passion of Christ may be achieved; her presence there is the work of a love that has neglected nothing, which has accepted everything, it is a perfect redemption. How was it that the Apostle St Paul dared to say, "In my person I have achieved the Passion of Christ?" Well, my Brethren, the blood of Christ flows in each one of us, His members; the Passion of Christ exists that we may take part in it. Our tears then take on an incredible virtue; this flow of blood, swollen by our tears, will glorify the redemptive power of this blood.

However, the passion must be achieved in us. The Priest is at the Altar—Christ is on the Cross—but He needs servers. The Blessed Virgin is there, at the head of them.

We will ask her how it is that she has come there to lead us in this Passion of Christ.

Why does Our Lord seem to reserve for the purest souls sorrows that are chosen and exquisite, that are designed by a refinement that argues a will? It is because the purest souls are the strongest. When souls are pure, sorrow can penetrate much deeper into them.

The soul which has sinned should thank God that all its sins are changed into thorns . . . but the pure souls are the strongest and, accordingly, in this purer

vessel sorrow is more like to the sorrow of Christ; there does not proceed from it laziness or any feeling of stupor, there proceeds from it a certain sweetness which spreads itself in tenderness, which makes the earth breathe the fragrance of Heaven; by the fact of this sublimation the soul is raised higher, as mountains are raised by the fires that burn inside them. When purity, prayer, and sorrow—that magnificent Trinity—meet in one soul, and when the capacity for these three is found in one heart, then surely God cannot resist it. This is the reason why God sometimes visits the purest souls, and why He seems to reserve for them the choicest sorrows.

The Most Blessed Virgin is there to make reparation. She suffers at the foot of the Cross not only from the sorrows of Christ, but also from the cries, the blasphemies of those men who reject the grace of Christ and cry out, "Let His blood be upon us." This makes her suffer, and she presents herself in the name of humanity, as a very world of love and at the same time of sorrow. How many of these creatures of His there will be, who will bring trouble and ruin, separating what God has united, how many of these souls devoured with the desire for conquering! She sees all those souls who will work that others may be lost; she climbs Calvary to the foot of the Cross. Climb with her—you are stronger when you can go there, when you can rest there. So one may be grieved by blasphemies and yet love the souls that are so blameworthy. Had God looked upon those souls

with the divine smile with which He looked upon mine, how much better than I they would have been. They may be far from God, but we would have been still further had not God called us.

Can one make reparation without suffering? Consider the Divine Master—was it His preaching or His parables that won souls? No, in spite of their magnificence, the conquest of souls was the price of His blood. Can one draw souls by capturing them with petty attentions? No, my Brethren, we must suffer in order to attract a soul and give it to God. What touches the heart of a man infinitely is to learn that a good soul whose devotion he has admired has suffered and prayed for him. This is what reaches into souls and conquers them, as we can never conquer them by trying to force conviction into them. Our word is of little import, it carries so short a distance. What we can do is so little and we do it so badly. Those souls can really work who know how to behave towards God.

To make *reparation*—a terrible word. Why have you invented it? When I see my own faults before me so that I am almost stifled by them, they say to me, "Be quiet, have you made reparation for your own sins?" And yet, in spite of our unworthiness, God wished this thought to make us better. God can say "You have done wrong; there is such and such a soul to whom you have done wrong. Well, then, will you weep for it before God, your heart broken with remorse?" In order to make reparation, we must

have a clear and correct idea of what reparation is ; we can only weep and pray when we know what we are and know our own unworthiness. Let us then make reparation in this spirit, with a more vital and penetrating, more humble idea of what we are ; the Blessed Virgin is there to lead us.

We have already spoken of the great sorrow which Christ had in seeing that His blood would be shed for many in vain. The Prophet Isaias had foreseen this when he cried : " You have sent me to gather together again Israel and Jacob, and behold Israel has not let himself be gathered together, and Jacob has not come to my voice." But the eyes of Christ as He died could see the whitening harvest ; all the peoples who were not Israel and Jacob have come to the foot of the Cross. Be not disturbed, Mary, for your sorrow will surely be fruitful. " Mother, behold your Son." She seems to lose her own Son, but she will find Him again in the children who will be born of her sorrow ; so will her sorrow be very fruitful, and she will be as the woman in the Gospel who forgets her sufferings in the joy of having brought a son into the world. If you suffer, then strive after purity of suffering.

When the Saints sowed the seed they did not trouble about the harvest ; but on the day when God will call them, they will be astonished to see the harvest which is growing ripe and yellow behind them ; this, then, is what we must be concerned to do, to sow without taking thought of what we will reap.

I leave you close to the Cross, where it is good to

return continually, where it is good to breathe. There alone can you perceive the importance of certain smaller things, there alone can you see the merits of your neighbour. Let us go there to beat our breasts as the man who comes down from Calvary. Do not consider whether you have committed such and such a fault ; that is not what we feel at the foot of the Cross. We have a more piercing contrition than that, we feel that we must throw our souls completely at the feet of God, and tear sin out by the roots. We must indeed keep ourselves very simple and humble before this love which overwhelms us, which gives us such goodness. Goodness is born in a soul which has understood what it has received.

X

THE WORDS OF CHRIST ON THE CROSS

I

YOU are gathered to-day around the Cross, at the feet of Jesus, like a large family around its Father; there Our Lord has died, there we have been given life in His blood.

On this day we cannot bear to hear any talk save of His sorrows; we wish to engraft our own on to them; we wish to hide ourselves in His wounds—for there are some things which we must hide even from ourselves—in the wounds made by love. We feel that we must read in His wounds the love which will never cease, and cry with the Apostle, "Dominus meus et Deus meus! My Lord and my God!" Truly only the goodness of a God could have gone so far.

To-day, my Brethren, we come to hear the last words of Jesus, words bursting with truth, words which contain all the essence of His teaching. These are the words that come from the heart of our Lord, and we wish to write them in the depths of our hearts. We will ask the Most Blessed Virgin, she who engraved them most deeply in herself, to write them in our hearts, to make the lessons which they

contain take root in us, that we may learn to be truly children of His Cross.

My Brethren, the Divine Master had just been raised up on the Cross. His hands and feet were stretched out, the nails had just been driven in ; till then He had kept silence—and His silence is not the least of the lessons of His Passion—but as soon as they erected the Cross, He spoke for the first time. What is He going to leave us ? He is going to give us one of His last words.

There is something very affecting in being with a dying man and seeing the gentleness with which he bears his suffering ; but when the dying man is not content with taking his suffering gently, if his only preoccupation seems to be the sorrow of those around him, if he forgets himself in his thought for others, then indeed we hail in this dying man, so noble in suffering, a son of God. Already we see in him the mark of predestination. So it is, my Brethren, that as we approach the Cross we hear the first word of Christ. It was inspired by goodness.

Under all the outrages which Jesus suffered, when He was insulted by the crowd in the Prætorium, when the wrath of His enemies vented itself in the scourging, what was growing in His heart ? What thoughts were arising ? Before all that ingratitude, my Brethren, before all that injustice, under the weight of such sorrow, His first word is to give us a thought of forgiveness, of goodness. " Father, forgive them for they know not what they do." This is what was in

the heart of Jesus, what reached through His heart even when He was beaten and humiliated. Dig deep into His hands and feet, but even if you dig right to the bottom you will find nothing but goodness ; forgiveness is all that He wished to extend to us.

Why was the Cross erected, if not that it might be the tribunal from which Jesus gives forgiveness ? The blood now flows for the first time from the Cross ; this blood gives His words more force, makes them imperious ; His plea for pardon is a demand ; to this voice nothing can be refused, it penetrates Heaven ; it brings down the justice of God : " *Pater, dimitte illis* "—it is the offering of the victim, it is pardon come down to earth for ever.

Remain on the Cross, sweet Jesus, remain on the altar of sacrifice ; the world, heavy with its sins, has need of this word which comes even to the wicked ; we wish always to hear Your word of pardon. We have not, alas, always the excuse : " They know not what they do." There are some souls who have felt deeply the sufferings of the Passion, souls who, after having lived close to Jesus, have wandered far from Him ; these do not deserve to hear this word of pardon. . . . But yes, they may hear it, O my Lord, for this word is said for the whole world. I must shelter by the foot of Thy Cross that I may hear it and believe it ; I must see Thee in the very act of Thy sacrifice ; I must feel the blood that flows for all sinners ; if I were to consider myself alone I could believe no longer in this word. . . . But there is yet

another lesson for me to learn. Yesterday, on Holy Thursday, Thou didst tell us to love one another ; to-day Thou repeatest the lesson in a new way. We who live by Thy blood feel the commandment of Thy love more deeply ; we are children of Thy pardon and of Thy blood ; how, then, can we fail to forgive one another ? Make us understand, Lord, at the foot of Thy Cross, that we must indeed forgive others, we who have ourselves such need of forgiveness. Let Thy first word be a lesson to us also of goodness. Make a merciful people arise around Thy Cross, of people who help us to believe in goodness, who preach Thy life by their actions and Thy death by their charity ; a people of souls who if they are not happy make up for it by being good, a people of souls to whom Thy devotion shall have taught the lesson of generous devotion.

II

My Brethren, our Saviour's Cross has been raised up. On either side there are two other common crosses, and two very different beings, whom also death is presently to visit. But before death comes, listen to the cries of the good thief who joins his sufferings to those of Jesus. It will be enough for him to recognise the justice of God ; let him but look once—he is not free to do anything else—let him but cast one glance at the Divine Master, let him confess the justice of his sufferings, let this criminal cry out but once, and he will be heard ; he will receive his

request ; he receives Paradise. He Who has not even a stone whereon to lay His head, will give him His kingdom ; the Son of Man will be able to say to him, " This very day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise," with Him at the very moment when Jesus Himself enters Paradise. On the cross he confesses at the very last moment ; he opens his heart in that of the Saviour, and Christ is there with His hand stretched out, this hand before which we, too, come to receive absolution. This hand will always be stretched out to extend forgiveness. Under this hand the thief leaves behind all his crimes ; that one moment was enough for his soul to collect itself in a thought of humble and penitent confidence. His words will not be lost, and in a strange way this poor creature will be identified with Jesus, his sufferings will share in the fruitfulness of the sufferings of Jesus, and the wood of his cross will partake of the virtue of the Cross of Jesus. Oh, could we but so place our cross by the side of His, in a spirit of humility and simplicity !

But this, my Brethren, we can do. Straining ourselves against the Cross of the Divine Master, we can unite our sufferings to His that they may become living. If, when we are close to Jesus, a cry of humility, of confusion, a plea for forgiveness escapes our lips, if, linking our sorrows with those of Jesus, we recognise at least that we have deserved them, then, O wonder, Jesus will not give us a mere word of pardon, He will give us a kingdom. He knocks on the closed door, and however firmly it may be shut it will swing open on

its hinges and remain open for ever ; His knock is the key of the kingdom of Heaven. So it is that the good thief—the thief of Paradise, as they called him in the Middle Ages—this soul whom Jesus steals from hell, who a moment before was so wicked, has but to offer his sufferings with those of Jesus, has but to make an act of confession for his sins, for Jesus to say to him, " This very day you, you who have sinned, you who yesterday were wicked, shall enter into Paradise, with the Patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, with the Prophets of whom you are the unworthy son, among the very first." It is the victory of the Cross.

You will enter for ever. Where ? Into Paradise where you will see God, the God Whom before you could not see without terror, the God from Whom you prayed to be delivered ; but the God Who has died protects you against His hand ; you are covered under the shelter of Jesus dying, and you will be in Paradise for ever, to reign and live eternally. We will always, my Brethren, repeat these words of the thief, but never more than to-day, the day of the great Judgement of God, but the day, too, of His great bounty and mercies. We will consider our sufferings and see that they are well deserved, we will compare them with those of the good thief whom we resemble in so many ways—for subtle sins are as bad as gross ones—and we will keep ourselves like him in humility, in the spirit of repentance, and in sincere contrition, at the thought of this word of forgiveness, " This very day shalt thou be with Me in Paradise."

III

My Brethren, Christ's third word was directed entirely to Mary and the Apostle St John. The word which He spoke to His mother has something which the preacher hardly dares to touch upon, for he feels that he will never be able to speak as a Christian would have him speak ; there is in it something which nobody can express ; we can never reach to the heights of this sorrow, but still we cannot bear to hear of anything else.

See her there, the mother of Jesus, she is at the foot of the Cross. We can imagine the sorrow which she feels. Had I a friend, I would not trust myself to have him before me suffering and I able to do nothing for him. My Brethren, I understand that impotent rage which hardly stops short of blasphemy, for I have seen it in one witnessing the sufferings of the person nearest to his heart.

The mother of Jesus is there : *Stabat juxta crucem*, she is all that He loves, and He is to condemn her to an unheard-of martyrdom. He will fill her with sorrows so that she will be what she is rightly called, an ocean of grief. And her sufferings will increase. The Son and the mother are each other's executioners. The Most Blessed Virgin is there holding in her heart all the suffering and love that it can contain ; to-day her love is greater only that her suffering may be greater. She sees that her Son does not look on her

who had been the only object of His love, the only being to whom He had poured forth His heart; no, He looks upon one who is at the foot of the Cross, St John, the beloved Apostle, and He will find in him a substitute for Himself. He says: "Woman, behold your Son," receive Him, and bring to Him all the love and affection that you bore to me.

We cannot but dislike one who takes the place of someone we love; we cannot but feel that he is not the one whose place he has taken, and yet it is on St John that Our Lord looks. Yes, turn all your love on him whom I point out to you, all the love for Me that was stored in your mother's heart, the love that had never, even in Bethlehem, been so good, which had never been so great, so complete, so perfectly completed even by suffering, so sharpened by it as to-day. *Ecce filius tuus*, and with him, let your love be given to all the sons of the Cross, not only to St John, but to Judas too, to all those who are gathered at the foot of the Cross, to all those who may call themselves its sons. Love them, whatever they may be. Such was His word to Mary—give not to Me this immense love, but to all My children. Christ indeed knew what He was doing on the Cross.

It is the great day of gifts; Christ has already given His kingdom with His forgiveness, and now He is giving His mother also. He knew His mother's heart; He knew that it was the only one that was able to incline towards His, the only one in which He could find a love in the least worthy of His own. And now

on the Cross He bears witness to Himself that nothing is left to Him. Even His mother He gives us, with all her divine love, all her heart, all her sorrow. God must have formed this Blessed Virgin of a very choice clay that she might be worthy to be the mother of Christ! Had we seen her with the child in her arms we would have said "How she should love a being whom she loves at once as her son and as her God"; and this is the tender heart, deepened by grace, which is given us! It is this heart to which we have been confided, this heart so united to her Divine Son by prayers and sufferings. It is the gift of Jesus on the Cross.

And now He says to the disciple, *Ecce mater tua*. She is there, yours, she who is Mine and from whom I can ask anything, from whom you can ask anything, and from whom you may obtain it. There she is, to be yours now. And you know, my Brethren, that John took her as his most dear possession, as the living vessel in which Jesus had rested, and in which He still remains by His spirit and by His heart.

We will not forget, my Brethren, that she was given to us on the day of her great goodness, and that she wishes to be our mother. The birth of Jesus did not cost her any pain, but our birth cost her unspeakable anguish. Let us love her at the foot of the Cross.

It is at the foot of the Cross, too, that we see by her side the virgins who form a people of souls to pray, suffer, and save; these there will always be, for there will always be souls who stand close to the Tree of

knowledge of good and evil ; there will always be those who are consoled by remaining there.

These are the first three words of our Lord. They are in truth the three gifts of Jesus, of the Saviour Who opens Paradise, Who gives us a kingdom, Who then gives us His incomparable mother to be our refuge and our support, for whom we will never be able adequately to thank the dying Jesus.

IV

I would, my Brethren, that each one of the words of the Divine Master had pierced your hearts as the nails which held Him to the Cross pierced His hands and feet. But here is another word, much more terrible, perhaps the most awful, the most mysterious.

Darkness was beginning to fall on the Cross. You remember that in the Agony in the Garden it was not men who first laid their hands on Him ; the hand under which Christ was bowed down, under which He could speak no more, was the hand of His Father ; it lay not upon His Son but upon a victim weighted with the sins of the world. That is the saddest part of the Passion. It was neither the scourge nor the nails that drew the first blood ; no, His blood began to flow in the Garden of Olivet ; there it first burst out in the sorrow of Jesus as He saw the justice of God that had to be satisfied ; justice, alas, which we often do not fear enough ; now the Saviour looks no more around Him ; He sees the companions of His distress no more ;

He looks towards Heaven and finds it empty. He has just given His kingdom and now He sees Heaven close itself.

When a man suffers at the hands of men, when he feels that he is the victim of the injustice of a whole people, his only consolation is to withdraw into his own conscience and stay under the eye of God ; and he will find a certain joy in contracting within himself, in withdrawing from these unworthy beings whose opinion is nothing before that of God. Jesus has withdrawn into Himself. He looks for His Father Who has been gentle to Him, but His look fails to reach Him, and He cannot find the answering look for which He searches. He feels that He is forsaken not only by men but even by God.

" My God," He says, no longer " My Father "— but it is a God Who has fled and withdrawn into His holiness, a God from Whom He is repulsed ; it is the cry of the sins which He bore : " My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me ? " There seems to be a complaint here, but there is also a gift, for each of the words of Jesus contains a gift ; the words come from His heart.

There are souls from whom God seems to have retired, souls who think perhaps that they have been abandoned by God. . . . False friends, perhaps, have approached them, as the friends of Job who believed in certain secret sins which he did not mention. These souls have been loved by God, and now they search for the God Who has left them, and in their grief they cry out " My God, why hast Thou forsaken me ? "

How many has not this word consoled! There are multitudes of souls whom Jesus consoles by this word, souls to whom He says that they can ask for all, and who actually ask more for others than for themselves. Often we pray better when we are praying for others.

But, Lord, we must answer Your question. All of us who are here must answer it, we must tell You why You have been forsaken. It was that we might never be so forsaken. After our sins, which have deserved a hundred times the abandonment of God, after we have felt that we are forgiven, we feel the joy, as the Psalmist says, of Your saving presence: when we feel that we are rejuvenated, that we are again able to love God, to find tenderness for Him in our poor hearts, we will meditate on the fact that if God was forsaken, it was that we might have life. Life, my Brethren, comes back to us with the feeling of the presence of God, and after so many sins have been forgiven us, we will say to our Lord, "This is the price of Thy abandonment; I wish that Thy words may live in my heart which is so often to blame: I will remember, Lord, that it was for me that, alone on Thy Cross, during the hours of Thy agony, Thou wert abandoned, that I might never be abandoned."

V

The fifth cry, my Brethren, is *Sitio*—I thirst! It is the cry of the humanity of Christ. Pilate was indeed

a prophet, Caiphas, too, was a prophet, all are prophets in this Passion ; and the crowd prophesies also in its own way, when it says to Jesus " Save Thyself ! " Pilate cries *Ecce homo*, " Behold the man ! " It is not a man, it is mankind, with all its needs and miseries. Behold the man with all his sorrows ! The more human He was in his perfection, the more was suffering multiplied in him, the more delicate an instrument He became for feeling suffering. And this pure and perfect body of Christ was afflicted by pain ; the purer it was, the more delicately was it made for suffering.

In the human being there is something which makes it tougher than it really is to suffer pain ; so we make our bodies insensitive, we shut all the doors to pain that we possibly can. But Christ gives over His whole body, all His limbs, and in the midst of all His sufferings there is yet one which overtops them all. His head had been crowned with thorns, He had been torn by the scourge of the executioners, His hands and His feet had been pierced by nails, His whole body was torn, and yet now there comes a pettier suffering, the least of all, but still so painful, which almost imperceptibly introduces the shrillest note in this concert of all sufferings, the cry which reaches far, the cry which we might almost say is hissed out : *Sitio ;* there is the suffering of Christ ; this cry should live in us, in us who take such pains to avoid suffering so quickly, even before it has come, while it is still on the way.

Sitio : that is indeed the woe of humanity on this

earth ; but the earth cannot quench this unquenchable thirst ; everything makes it more acute ; it is a mark of the human race, for men are the sons of God and the earth cannot nourish them. My Brethren, the soul can live on no cheap diet. It needs something else ; we hear our race in that human cry : *Sitio.* Everything I have drunk has left me my thirst ; whatever the cup I raised to my lips, I put it down saying " I thirst," my thirst is greater still ; the things of this earth are of no use to me, and Jesus dies crying " I thirst," I thirst for something else. O Lord, may this world be to me but a place where I always thirst ! May I pass through life without anything quenching me, without anything slaking my thirst, may Thou Thyself draw for me nothing but by a miracle, as Thou didst draw water from a rock.

So we will join our cry to that of Our Lord. Man needs this unquenchable thirst which the earth cannot slake. Like Thee, Lord, I will die thirsting, I will die with the cry, " I asked them for drink and they gave me vinegar, that I might be driven to find other streams."

My Brethren, there is in this cry more than the supernatural thirst of Christ. You remember,—yes, indeed you remember, for it is one of the most affecting touches, one of the most charming stories in the life of Christ—how Jesus was coming down from Galilee to Judæa. He sat down by the well, tired with His journey and thirsty, and there He waits for someone, He waits for a poor creature who could not have

much to give to Him. He sees her come—Oh, hers was not a beautiful soul, but it was a soul—and Our Lord says " Give Me to drink."

On the Cross, Our Lord waits as He waited at the Well of Jacob. He is tired and always He waits. He sees frivolous souls go by, given over to who knows what, and He says to them, " I thirst for love, I thirst for something, for a little affection : you have committed so many sins, I thirst for a little repentance : you have received so many gifts, I thirst for a little gratitude : I have so clearly shown you what I am, I thirst for a little love." It is the cry of the wretched. But He asks only that He may give, for it is He who says to us, " Let him who thirsts come to Me." On Thy Cross, Lord, Thou hast broached all the sources of life where we may drink our fill, the source of all sweetness, of all the joy that flows into our souls when Thy heart descends into us in the Holy Eucharist ; there shall we go to drink . . . let us turn our looks towards the sources that have been opened for us : *Proposito sibi gaudio sustinuit crucem.*

And we, my Brethren, who a moment ago were so thirsty and now are so consoled, we shall go to these sources and drink our fill, we will take in great draughts the nourishment that quenches the thirst of our souls, which gives fresh youth to our strength. Your cry, Lord, asks something of us ; You ask of us a little repentance, a little gratitude, and You promise us in return that we shall feel the joy of giving ourselves to You, of trying to make those around us happy ; funda-

mentally, Lord, You ask only that You may give us more.

VI and VII

In a way, my Brethren, there is more repose and tranquillity in the two last words of Christ. Death is approaching, and already we begin to feel its peace. Often great sorrow makes us wish for its beneficent power.

The head of Jesus falls on to His breast. *Consummatum est.* " My Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit."

Everything is consummated, and just as He is about to die, Jesus sees all His life pass before Him. He sees Bethlehem and His birth, Nazareth and Galilee, the Lake of Tiberias, the witness of so many kindnesses. He sees His journeys in ungrateful Judæa ; He sees the desert unroll before Him where He had worked so many miracles ; He sees the crowd which has lived by the goodness of His heart, by His words. And as He looks over His life He can say " All is consummated." This is the end of this life which was so full, in which so much had been accumulated ; the good words, the miracles which were never dictated by power but only by goodness : *Consummatum est.*

I have done all that was required of Me : what more should I do for the will of My Father that I have not done, achieved, achieved to perfection ?

I was to be born, and I was born ; I was to work and to live the life of a workman in Nazareth ; I have

worked and for thirty years I lived a workman's life ; I was to preach, and I have preached ; I was to do good, and I have done it ; I was to suffer, and I have suffered in all my body, from the crown of my head to my feet ; I was to die, and now death is upon Me. What should I have done that I have not done ?

Now the debt of humanity will be paid ; and the justice of God, however terrible it be, cannot but say as it sees the completion of the work, " All is consummated." Mercy says, too, " All is consummated." Mercy has gone as far as it could go ; it has met justice on the Cross ; the two have joined hands and become one, and they have hailed the perfection of the task.

How insatiable is love ! it called for sufferings and sorrow to satisfy it, and though it had been never so difficult to satisfy, yet now it says, too, *Consummatum est.* It was impossible for Thee, Lord, to show more love. At the foot of the Cross we defy Thee to do more.

The work of justice, of mercy, of grace, and of love—all is consummated, and all the gifts assured to man will be his, with forgiveness, for ever, all that the human soul needs to live for ever in Heaven, all that was gained by the merits of the Cross, and given to us as an inexhaustible store.

As Jesus dies He considers the work which He came to do. He sees His Power which sows His mercies throughout the ages. He is now to die in the sorrowful glory of a conqueror who has won his kingdom at the point of the sword.

Yes, Lord, Thy work is consummated; and now my life is coming to its close, and I shall have begun nothing; here comes death, and still I follow any barren whims, any caprice that occurs to me. For Thee all is consummated, and for me, at Thy feet, refreshed by so many graces, everything has still to be begun. My soul, Lord, is in such a state that I fly from Thee; I must hide in Thy wounds.

But here is the last word, a word of consolation for you. "My Father, into Thy hands I commend my spirit." Now Heaven is opened again; having drained the bitter cup, Christ has given His soul back to God. To Him He gives back this victorious soul, after it has been sacrificed to so many sufferings, filled and animated with such fidelity, so patient, so sweet, so avid for the glory of His Father. His soul will appear before His Father with confidence.

And where, O my Saviour, is my poor soul? My poor soul of which Thou wilt ask an account from me, which Thou canst summon to-day, the soul on account of which I have such fear of the presence of God. When I see it, I shudder at so awful a sight; implant in me, Lord, the disposition which will make me feel real and profound repentance.

I am afraid of Him to Whom I must give back my soul. I must contemplate Thy bowed head, Thy nailed feet: I must look upon Thee that I may have the courage to give back my soul to Thy Father, my soul which Thou seest, which Thou knowest. . . . No matter what it may be, yet under the shadow of Christ,

sheltered by Thy Cross, I can confide it to God. To Thee, Lord, I commend it, in Thy hands I place it.

There comes a time when everything loses its brilliance—it is now a long time since this happened for me—everything is at first obscured, and then extinguished. I am on my death-bed and death only now awaits me ; yet there is one ray of light before me ; it is the sign of the Son of Man, living by suffering. To this Son of Man I can confidently give back my soul. I will fall asleep with Thee in the death which Thou also didst allow Thyself to taste, the death which Thou also hast undergone that we might for ever enjoy Thy Paradise, thanks to Thy glorious and blessed death.

XI

THE COMPASSION OF OUR LADY

THE Divine Master wished to have as a witness of His Passion, to love His Passion as He would have it loved, to know it deeply, to correspond with it in the depths of the soul, a witness who would come into intimate contact with it, and who would represent humanity in the part which humanity should take in the sacrifice. This intimate witness, so stricken with grief and sorrowful for the heart of Jesus, is Mary, full of sorrows as she has been full of grace, for the sorrow conceived in the presence of the Passion is a grace, one of the greatest which the faithful soul can obtain from the Saviour.

Our Lord wished to have a completely pure witness, one who would not need to look at the Cross for her own sins.

Magdalen has indeed her place here ; but if she looks at the Cross she sees beside the sorrows of Jesus the blemishes of her own soul. She looks within herself, and Jesus wishes to have a soul which can look only to Him, which lives in Him, a soul in which He Himself suffers. This is why this is the place of the Immaculate Virgin who has no sins of her own to weep

for ; it is the place of the mother, of her who suffers more profoundly because her love is greater, because she loves as no other could love. Suffering, with the compassion that Jesus wants, can be complete only in the heart of the Virgin Mary.

We will try, then, my Brethren, to enter a little into her sorrow. Our Lord wished for sympathy with His sufferings. He invites the sympathy of all of us, He asks us to retrace in ourselves this perfect type, according to the measure of the graces we have received, in differing degrees, doubtless, but at least in some measure.

Mary was a mother, as a mother she suffered, as a mother she loves and loves infinitely. The Holy Ghost often spoke of the mother in the Old Testament, of the being who loves and suffers, who suffers because she loves, the measure of whose suffering is the measure of her love.

The first sorrow, then, of Our Lady is this sorrow of a mother, incomparable because it is proportioned to the measure of her incomparable love. God had given to the mother He chose all possible perfections, with a degree of sensibility which human nature could not have borne without the support of an exceptional force. It was the sensibility of an absolutely pure heart, perfect in delicacy. What prevents us from feeling true sorrows (any Christian mother will know this when she sees her child first go astray), what kills true sensibility, is love that is led astray towards things that are unworthy of the human heart.

The Most Blessed Virgin, on the contrary, is there with a heart which is of virginal purity at the same time as it burns with maternal tenderness, and she suffers in the very measure of her perfections.

Her sorrow is proportioned also to the perfections of her Divine Son. When she looked upon Him she never feared—as a Christian mother might fear—that she might love too much the child she held in her arms, that her love of the child might rob God, for the Son was her God, and the more she loved her Son the more she loved God.

Everything that was added to her heart when she saw the beauty of her Son, when she rejoiced in His presence, when she saw Him disclose the unplumbed depths of all His divine perfections, all that had made the love of Mary, now makes her grief. Her sorrow is measured by her love ; every motive for love is now a motive for sorrow ; the more perfect her Son is, the more sorrow it causes Mary to see Him so treated.

The soul of Mary puts itself in the place of the body of Jesus. It envelops Jesus that it may live where He lives and suffers. The soul of Mary becomes one entire wound because the body of Jesus is one entire wound. The heart of Mary is the mirror of infinite perfections, of perfect purity ; in it are reflected all the wounds of Jesus, and this mirror does not only reflect them, it receives them too. Everything that strikes Jesus penetrates painfully into the heart of Mary, absolutely everything, even down to the smallest distress.

Mary wishes to be the woman of sorrows by the side of Him Who is the Man of Sorrows ; she would be the bride of blood, by the side of Him Who has called Himself in the Sacred Scriptures the Spouse of Blood. This is her supernatural sorrow proportioned to her infinite love, the infinite love which Mary bore to her Son Who was God.

He was suffering and she could do nothing. He was suffering infinitely, He called for a drop of water for His parched lips, He asked for a heart to understand and solace Him ; she could do nothing. And if she looked tenderly at her Son, tortured before her eyes, she did but add a new torment, a new wound to His Heart. His cries pierced to the depths of Mary's heart, for these cries she was hearing for the last time, cries of sorrow, the astonishing cry of abandonment, the cry of death.

She will never hear this voice again. He will leave her, He for Whom she weeps already as though He were dead. No one will speak of Him to her as she feels that they should speak ; no one will understand her, not even John himself, who does not know this mystery. She must keep her memories to herself alone, for she alone understands and loves Him Who has filled all her thoughts all her life. She will be obliged to shut all these things within her heart.

We sometimes complain when we feel that we are not understood, when we have in our heart some particularly delicate shade of feeling which we cannot

communicate to another ; we complain that others speak a strange language, so ill do they understand us. Such will be Mary's fate. She will speak a language which no one will understand, for none will ever feel how much she loved, and how lovable she was to Him Whom she loved.

These are the sufferings of Mary, the sufferings of an absolutely pure heart, the sufferings of a mother whose Son is God ; that is to say, a Son Who is infinitely lovable, the suffering of a sorrowful memory of which she will never be able to speak with anyone, for none will understand her.

And why does Mary suffer ? Why, indeed ? Mary had not been present at the honouring of Jesus, she had not been with Him in His triumphs—they had been short, it is true, but still He had had them—she had not been there in the wonder of His miracles, in the glory of His humanity. But we feel that Mary must be present at the Passion. She is necessary to Calvary, as she was necessary to the Incarnation.

What she willed when she said *Ecce ancilla Domini*, that is, the salvation of the human race by the Incarnation, she must will again by the Redemption ; she will have to repeat what she has already said once : *Ecce ancilla Domini ; fiat mihi secundum verbum tuum.*

And if the words are a sword that pierces her, that cleaves her in two, still we feel that she must be with Jesus when He suffers, when He dies, because it is for

this hour of sorrow, this hour of death and expiation, that Jesus has come.

It is the supreme, sorrowful, capital moment, and the mother must be by the side of her Son since He has said that His ministers would be there where He was. Still more must His mother be there, who was at once the stricken victim and the priest who offers the victim, her heart torn by sorrow. Now it is that Jesus fulfils His mission, that the name of Jesus, of the Saviour of Men, is written on her whole being in huge letters of blood. Jesus completes His work, and beside Him should be His mother, participating in the Redemption as she participated in the Incarnation. It is the hour of Jesus, and it is also the hour of His mother.

Indeed, Mary needed to be there, united to her Son. Nothing could have torn her from Him, for she felt that the glory of the creature, the glory, since the Incarnation and the Redemption, of the human soul, is to be made like to Jesus, the first born in the new creation to institute which He came.

When the Saviour turns towards a blessed soul, wishing to form it, to make it great, to give it a part in the Church, He brings it close to Himself by initiating it into His character of Saviour, He visits it with suffering. He associates it to Himself by sorrow, He writes His Passion on this soul—perhaps also on its body—but He impresses indelibly on the soul the compassionate love which penetrates it, by the singular torments which afflict it, by the abandonment which

is all around it, so cruel and sorrowful, that so He may, as it were, detach it and hold it suspended between Heaven and earth. He writes the Passion on it with anguish, with profound horror, with crucifying desires. Jesus never calls a soul in a special manner, to be something in His Church, to enter on a mission in any way of reparation (and of these there are many), without assimilating it to one of His sorrows.

Mary was assimilated to all of them ; Mary was stricken by the same blows as her Son. She has opened her heart to receive all His blows, that she may be a being united as closely as a creature can be to Jesus the Saviour, to Jesus the Redeemer, to Jesus suffering for men.

Therein lies her greatness ; the greatness of a soul depends on the degree of knowledge of His sacrifice and Passion which Jesus is pleased to give to it. And Mary was the greatest because in her the resemblance was the most perfect.

She, above all, has merited the title of *Reparatrix*.

We have hailed her by the name of the " Second Eve," and faith shows her to us on this awful Mount of Calvary, on this bare mount—its name tells us how terrible it was—she has no thought of having herself adored as a divinity ; her only thought is to adore this incomprehensible love, this infinite goodness which is revealed in the person of the Father Who has so loved the world that He gave His only Son, in the person of Jesus, Who gives Himself and gives His mother too. She is annihilated in her adoration of such goodness

and suffering. She is not crushed by contrition for her faults, for Mary was faultless ; she is absorbed in the profound identification of the loving soul with the object of its love, in the union of her heart with that of Jesus, in the most profound and penetrating adoration. She feels that she is preserved from all contagion of sin, she adores the preservation of her soul in the blood of Jesus ; she hails the extraordinary work of sanctification fulfilled in her ; she feels the glory flowing from this blood which will surround her in the eternity of Heaven ; she adores this blood with which she feels that she is covered, in profound humility because it is the humiliation of the creature with the greatest insight into its own nothingness.

At the foot of the tree Eve looked at the fruit which was so delightful to look upon, says the Sacred Scripture. Mary makes expiation and reparation ; she looks upon a stripped tree which bears but one unique fruit. This fruit is enough for the sorrow in her heart, for it is a fruit so bitter to see and to taste ! Her heart is drowned in bitterness because she makes reparation for guilty pleasure, the pleasure that offends God. The offering of Eve was that sin through which all evil came into the world. The offering of Mary at the foot of the Cross is her Son Who has taken on Himself all evils and repairs them by suffering to the uttermost depth of His being.

And following in the steps of Mary other souls have entered into this thought of reparation which over-

flowed from His heart : *Virgines adducentur post eam.* Jesus calls round His mother virginal souls like hers, who associate themselves with His mission, who destroy the instrument of sin for themselves or others in their own bodies and in generous and, above all, humble penitence—humility shines in penitence—reduce themselves to nothing before God in unknown sacrifices, the most beautiful of all, for only Jesus sees them. They enter on the work of reparation, as Mary entered on it, with all their powers of soul and heart. Mary is there to show us the fecundity of grief. Of old, the curse had been pronounced : " In grief shalt thou bring forth." Grief was the condition of fecundity.

We should learn from the Most Holy Virgin the holy fecundity of sorrow. We bless sorrow on account of the fecundity with which it has been endowed. We shall suffer, but we shall be raised up. I was speaking to you one day of sorrow united to prayer ; how great and beautiful is that union : prayer united to suffering penetrates further ; a soul may hope indeed when it prays while it suffers and suffers while it prays. But there is something which the world knows less, something infinitely greater, infinitely more beautiful, which throws a ray of light on the seemingly unjust suffering of certain creatures ; it is the union of innocence and suffering.

Mary never sinned and Mary suffered. Because she never sinned God has given her a great power of intercession on our behalf. He has granted to her tears which have nothing to wash away in her own soul

a value, through the Blood of Jesus, which covers and washes away the faults of others. God Who sees how impossible it is to draw tears from certain hearts, to obtain generosity from certain souls, is willing to find in the grief of those who suffer without having offended Him, a reason for blessing those who offend Him and do not weep, whose eyes have never let fall a single tear of regret, pity, compassion, or tenderness. God wishes to give Himself a pretext for saving souls, He wishes to give Himself a reason to bless them. So He strikes an innocent soul, He enlarges her capacity, He prepares for her so beautiful a share of glory, that she would not wish to be without even the least of her sufferings. God wishes the beauty of that soul, He beautifies her by suffering, and then in her finds a motive to pardon other souls. He does two things at once, both of them good, excellent, and infinitely touching ; He cleanses, He beautifies, He raises a soul by means of sorrow, and thus repairs and attracts another soul whom He will be able to call His daughter.

Such is the reason of the sufferings of the Most Holy Virgin. That is the meaning of this mysterious suffering which attacks the heart of one for whom the earth bears no more joy or pleasure. This is the answer to the objection arising out of the spectacle of innocence tried by trouble. This is God's plan in the sufferings of Mary, sufferings which emit rays of light, which contain a marvellous fecundity of blessing.

At the very moment when Mary's heart is most completely opened, the moment at which her love overflows most violently and pours like a torrent over the Cross of Jesus, Jesus bids her divert this torrent of love on to the disciple who alone, alas, represents all the others.

At the foot of the Cross, in the person of this disciple are all the children of Jesus, the children brought forth in the sorrows of Mary. And lo, this torrent of love which issues from the wounded heart of the mother spreads over all souls, even the executioners of her Son; of such a nature is the love which is poured forth on us at the moment of Mary's suffering.

When Jesus gives us His mother, He gives her no other title, He does not proclaim her as the consoler of the afflicted. When Jesus wished to be King of suffering humanity, He became King of sorrow; He took on Himself all our infirmities. So when Jesus wished to give us His mother, He has made her our mother by opening her heart to all the grief of humanity.

A special degree of goodness may be observed in a heart which has suffered; a person who has never suffered has no moral intuitions or delicacy of feeling. Jesus, as I have said, did not make Mary our mother by any extrinsic title, He made her the mother of suffering that she might bend over the hearts of sufferers.

When we see in life certain souls who are good and gentle drawn to the unhappy and wretched, who do

not wait until we tell them that we are suffering, who divine us at half a word, who find the right word to comfort us, one has a right to say : There is a loving heart, and more than that, a heart that has suffered. One feels instinctively that certain virtues are the fruit of sorrows accepted at the foot of the Cross. This soul has lived by the side of Jesus in His suffering, that is the school where she has been formed ; it is there that she has collected some drops of divine blood to vitalise her own grief ; her goodness has been written in her character with the blood of her own heart united to the Passion of Jesus.

Our Lord gives us a mother who has suffered, who understands suffering, and who remains in that state in order the more mercifully to draw us to her. He gives us a mother who loves in us something of which she recognises the price which she has paid. We become attached to people by sorrow, they have a double title to our love, and we feel a special affection towards those for whom we have suffered. It is with just that intimate profound affection that Jesus, Who loved us to the point of giving Himself for us, wishes Mary to love us.

This is why Mary is at the foot of the Cross. You will understand that I have indicated certain sides only of this mystery. Some of those present may find certain thoughts too lofty for them, some may fear the rôle of the sufferer and may say : " How can I unite myself to such a feeling ? I do not love as I should like to, I dare not say that I wish to suffer with Jesus ;

I am not among those souls whom God calls to a mission of reparation ; when I look at my own misery, I do not dare pray for others, I have enough to do for myself."

It may be so. There are thoughts which are not applicable to all souls, but all souls can ask Mary for something. She remains full of grace, she asks no better than to dispense it.

Her sorrows are graces in which she wishes us to share. We may ask of her to be united to the Passion of her Son ; we may ask her to communicate to us His spirit, to give us one tear of regret for our sins. If we cannot weep, let us ask her that we may at least regret our inability.

If we cannot weep over Jesus, let us at least weep in spirit over ourselves. Let us beg from Mary a more generous participation in the Passion in that spirit of sacrifice which reached such a height in her when she gave up her Son, in the courage expressed in that word : *Stabat*. . . . She stood erect, that desolate mother, she did not fall inert to the ground, she kept the posture of the sacrificing Priest. Let us ask of her the energy of her sorrow, less bitterness in our hearts, fewer burning tears of self-love, but more Christian ones that make us gentler to others : let us ask from her kindness, goodness, generosity, love in suffering.

All this she has the grace to obtain for us, for Jesus placed her at the foot of His Cross for our sakes ; He has shown us in His mother what He wishes to give

us : the hope which His sorrows gave to humanity and the glory with which His Passion can clothe those souls who unite themselves to it by acceptance of grief, by the sacrifice they make of themselves, by an act of goodness made in the name of Jesus suffering.

XII

THE MEMENTO OF THE DEAD

I WOULD have you mark that every page of the Gospel teaches us to pray one for another.

Consider the paralytic who cannot move; nevertheless he reaches the feet of Our Lord because he is carried to Him by others. It is Faith which urges his bearers to carry him, the Faith which Our Lord will reward by curing the man. Our Liturgy is full of this lesson, that we must pray for one another.

One thing has struck me particularly for a long time, that at the Canon of the Mass it would seem that the priest is going to shut himself up in isolation, to wipe out all memories that do not bear directly on God, to lose himself in this unique thought of contemplation. It is not so. The priest must think of others. The Church places the *Memento of the Dead* on his lips; he must think of those whom he is about to present to Our Lord; he never comes alone before Him; he comes with those whom Our Lord has given to us to love; and this is an infinitely great honour. For the priest this is no forgetfulness of God, but an entry into God's thought, God's work, God's sole preoccupation.

One often has distractions when saying Mass ; for my part I have many ; but the word " Memento " awakens the attention again, opens the heart, one feels something that stirs the interest and moves one again ; Our Lord will be more worthily received when we have presented to Him those whose care He has confided to us. I have often proved this by experience.

Prayer which is addressed to God alone may seem a little vague ; but if we think of others our attention is quickened. It may be gratitude that moves us, or sorrow, or perhaps remorse that we have not acted better to such and such a person. Such a thought may well disturb us. But all these thoughts have not had the effect of making us leave God ; or, if we have left Him, it is only that we may find Him again more fully in another way.

When we pray for others we pray more and better, for we unite our thought to that of the Divine Master.

This is still more striking when we arrive at the Memento of the Dead. At this moment Our Lord is actually present. Should we lose ourselves in Him ? Should we sink ourselves in the most profound of meditations ? Not at all. One might think that before Him Who should absorb everything, Who is in the Ciborium, Who is really present on the altar, this thought of the Dead might be a distraction from Him. But no, when you are one with the work of the Divine Master, you are one with Him.

Lord, Thou art the God of the living, Thou art He Who makes us to live.

He came to bring life to those who have it not, to those who are in the shades of death. Of these not one is like another, any more than one leaf is like another leaf, yet all receive their life from Him, and God is thus glorified and clothed with new splendours ; it is He that shines and sheds a special light upon each one, a ray from His own light.

You see, too, the unspeakable consolation which this Memento of the Dead brings us.

He Who is before me is also close to those for whom we weep. Thus they are brought particularly close to us.

Thou hearest me, Lord, Thou art there that I may speak to Thee of those whom I love ; Thou art with them at the same time as Thou art with me ; Thou wishest me to give something of myself for these souls of the dead.

What greater or more consoling happiness could there be ? Ask the son who is a priest whether he is not happy to say Holy Mass for his mother ; ask him if he does not feel that he is armed by prayer to give back to her what he has received from her.

What happens in our hearts is what has come out of the heart of Christ ; I am already in communion with Him before Holy Communion.

This prayer of the Memento of the Dead is so consoling. Lord, they live from Thee and by Thee ; and Thou art so close to me. I try to live from Thee and by Thee, and so it is the same life that flows in all of us.

So beautiful is this that one might fear that it were not true, but in religion beauty is commensurate with truth ; the things of faith rest upon a dogma ; it is large and great, deep, astonishing, and admirable ; and the deeper one digs into it the more one finds. Did we but know what life was we would understand.

The souls in Purgatory live by hope only. They look to us, but what forgetfulness and coldness they find in the world ! Those who are still alive promised to remember them for ever, and now their very names are known no more.

This coldness fills them with fear.

While I am alive I must feel that there is a being who loves me always ; this is particularly touching, as it is an earnest of eternal life. So we must carry a little of this sustaining love, which helps us to love and live, to the shades where are the souls of the dead. Life is impossible without love.

What regrets I have for the poor being to whom I have been too cold and selfish ! I have so much for which I must make reparation. What would I not give for one moment only, for just one moment, in which to tell him that I love him and ask him whether he forgives me ! But see how Our Lord still allows us to do something for this soul. He gives us the Communion of Saints. For this I shall never thank Him enough, for it is the means of making reparation now that I see things so clearly.

Such is the *Memento of the Dead.* You keep a bond with those who have gone and whom you can still

solace. The Memento comes to help the soul, to help it to pray. The soul feels that Our Lord is close to it ; in the kingdom of death He has implanted the beginnings of life ; the love of Christ is stronger than death.

You ask too little of God, my Brethren. Let your hearts swell larger, ask more than you do for these souls whom He cherishes so tenderly, for you have the power of Christ with you ; let your hearts indeed contain His.

Ask greatly ; your hearts will grow greater as you pray for others, and Our Lord will be with you.

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